



Norwegian University  
of Life Sciences

Master's Thesis 2016

30 ECTS

International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric)

# **Recognizing Women in the Struggle for Social and Environmental Justice in the Context of the Belo Monte Hydropower Dam in the Brazilian Amazon**

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International Environmental Studies

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Context of the Belo Monte Hydropower Dam in the Brazilian Amazon

Master Thesis



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## **Declaration**

I, Tove Mariann Heiskel, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....

Date.....



## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis would not have been written were it not for the help, support and encouragement of numerous people. I especially would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Esben Leifsen, for his guidance, comments and encouragement, which have been of great value during the entire process of this work. I would also like to thank the Department for International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric) and the association Water, Rivers and People for providing travelling funds to carry out my fieldwork.

Special thanks go to the Movement of Dam-Affected People (MAB) coordinators in Pará, who helped me throughout fieldwork in 2015, introduced me to informants and social movements in Altamira and accompanied me in the field. Thank you all for your time, help, openness and patience. I am very grateful to the MAB in São Paulo for receiving me at the National Meeting of Dam-Affected People and for making space for me in the field-trip they organized to the Xingu and Tapajós Rivers in 2013. This travel was organised by MAB in Altamira and Itaituba, and it lay the base for this thesis.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude and recognition to all the informants. Thank you for sharing your touching stories with me.

I owe a special thanks to Professor Pedro Arrojo, from the University of Zaragoza, who introduced me to the problems with mistaken water policies. I am very grateful for everything I learnt from him about large dams, human impacts and social struggles during the years of work in the Water, Rivers and Peoples exhibition and its social agenda.

Thanks to Eric Cezne and Beth Gelb who translated several of the interviews for me and helped out with clarifications in some of the other interviews. Your help is most appreciated.

I also owe an enormous gratitude to Alberto Bernués for his unwavering support, advice and encouragement during all steps of this thesis, and for being by my side in good and difficult times – this thesis would not be possible without you. I am forever grateful. My heartfelt gratitude goes to our wonderful children, Matilde and Elias, for their understanding, help and patience in the weeks I was away and during a chaotic time during the writing process. I can never thank you enough.





## **Abstract**

In this thesis, I explain the interlinkages between large dams, women and struggles for social justice within the context of the Belo Monte dam. First, I study how and why women are impacted in different ways by the Belo Monte project, and secondly, I explore how affected women, involved in social movements, react to the effects of the Belo Monte hydropower dam, and what results their struggle has given.

The study is based on a qualitative research methodology. The empirical data derived from semi-structured interviews and analyzed by means of inductive content analysis. The discussion of the results was framed within the three dimensions of social and environmental justice theory (distribution, recognition and participation) and conceptualised in a gender perspective, with a focus on women.

The findings show that people from riverside communities were impoverished by dispossession and maldistribution practises imposed by the construction authorities and also by their collective abandonment of the uprooted people in terms of public services, mitigation- and rehabilitation strategies. These sudden and vast changes affected women severely because of their traditional position as caretakers of the family, linked to their home and community. The forced displacement to inland resettlement-suburbs with lacking public infrastructure and water supply, increased and complicated women's daily work burdens and ended their incomes from resource-dependent smallholder activities. Existing problems of gender-related violence and sexual abuse increased after the Belo Monte project due to the vast immigration of construction workers and the social confusion the project generated. No adequate measures had been taken to avoid this situation. Being bound to the home and family where the grievances, problems and desolation were most evident, women ended up in the very short end of distributional inequity having to cope and overcome the challenges.

While these impacts are significant, I argue that increased awareness about local women's lives, losses and claims are important to implement measures to overcome them (Buechler et al. 2015; Dyck 2005), and importantly, to recognize that local women's interests are different than the ideas powerful decision-makers have for development. To obtain change, it is important to include women's participation in decision-making arenas in large socio-environmental projects such as the Belo Monte dam, and likewise in the construction of national policies and regulations.

I suggest that by paying attention to women's lives, voices and actions, one can obtain valuable information about some of the hidden drivers of social and environmental change such as: unjust distribution, misrecognition of difference and exclusion in decision-making processes, which are all obstacles to a move towards equity and justice. In this thesis, I conclude that women's participation helps building gender-just movements and incorporates women's claims in political strategies associated with socio-environmental movements; strategies that demand just distribution, recognition and participation in order to confront economic, cultural and political oppression of marginalised groups, with women at the centre.

## List of abbreviations

ANEEL Agência Nacional de Energia Elétrica- Brazilian Electricity Regulatory Agency

ABNT Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas- Brazilian Association of Technical Norms

BNDES Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social- Brazilian Development Bank

CCBM Consórcio Construtor Belo Monte- Belo Monte Construction Consortium

CDDPH Conselho de Defesa dos Direitos da Pessoa Humana- Council for the Defense of Human Rights (Brazil)

EIA Environmental Impact Assessment

FPIC Free, Prior and Informed Consent

FUNAI Fundação Nacional do Índio- Agency for Indigenous Affairs

IBAMA Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis - Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Natural Renewable Resources

ILO International Labour Organization

ISA Instituto Socio-Ambiental- Socio-Environmental Institute

MAB Movimento do Atingidos por Barragens- Movement of Dam-Affected People

MMC Movimento Mujeres Camponesas- Movement of Peasant Women

MMTACC Movimento de Mulheres Trabalhadoras de Altamira Campo e Cidade- Movement of Women Workers in Altamira

MPF Ministério Público Federal- Federal Public Prosecutor

MW Megawatt

MXVPS Movimento Xingu Vivo Para Sempre- Xingu Forever Alive Movement

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

PBA Plano Básico Ambiental- Basic Environmental Plan

PAC Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento- Growth Acceleration Program

## List of figures

Figure 1. Altamira, Novo Horizonte in Brazil Novo and Belo Monte region	9
Figure 2. Location of urban resettlement areas in Altamira	11
Figure 3. Scheme of the analytical framework	15
Figure 4. State Agencies and Corporate Actors involved in the Belo Monte dam	28
Figure 5. Norte Energia Consortium shareholders	29
Figure 6. Riverside community by the Xingu River located in the flood-area of the reservoir (2013)	45
Figure 7. Riverside in Altamira city before reservoir flooding (2013)	55
Figure 8. Demolished houses by the riverside in Altamira city (2015)	55
Figure 9. Boa Esperança district in Altamira before demolition (2013)	56
Figure 10. Boa Esperança district in Altamira before demolition (2013)	56
Figure 11. Jatobá, where housing for 1,100 families was constructed	57
Figure 12. Jatobá, resettlement area near Altamira constructed by Norte Energia	58
Figure 13. The occupied camp and land in Novo Horizonte (municipality of Brazil Novo)	67
Figure 14. The occupied camp and land in Novo Horizonte (municipality of Brazil Novo)	68
Figure 15. Roadblock of the Trans-Amazonian highway, organized by MAB in Altamira (2015)	99
Figure 16. Embroidery from the project Arpilleras about large dam's impact on women	103

## List of boxes

Box 1. Forced evictions	30
Box 2. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the Basic Environmental Plan (PBA)	34
Box 3. MAB claims on protection of women	98
Box 4. Transcript of a part of the speech of the Secretary of the Presidency, Mr. Gilberto Carvalho, in MAB's National Meeting held in São Paulo in 2013	107

## Table of contents

Declaration .....	v
Acknowledgements .....	vii
Abstract .....	ix
List of abbreviations .....	xi
List of figures .....	xii
List of boxes .....	xii
Table of contents .....	xiii
1. Introduction .....	1
1.1. Objectives and research questions .....	2
1.2. Structure of the thesis .....	3
2. Methodology .....	5
2.1. Project background and research approach .....	5
2.2. Study area and Belo Monte dam .....	8
2.3. Sampling approach .....	11
2.4. Interviews .....	12
2.5. Data analysis .....	14
2.6. Limitations of the study .....	16
3. Theoretical framework .....	19
3.1. Bridging gender and social and environmental justice theories .....	19
3.2. The gender perspective .....	20
3.3. Social and environmental justice .....	21
3.3.1. The three dimensions of social and environmental justice .....	23
4. Results and discussion .....	27
4.1. Actors involved, legal controversies of expropriation, consultation and licensing processes .....	27
4.1.1 Actors involved .....	27
4.1.2. Occupied land and forced evictions .....	30
4.1.3. General hearings .....	32
4.1.5. Licensing process .....	35

PART I .....	37
4.2. Women, expropriation and alienation from natural resources .....	37
4.3. Women and compensations.....	46
4.4. Women and displacement .....	52
4.4.1. Breach of community bond, housing and social services .....	52
4.5. Employment and child-care.....	61
4.6. Education.....	63
4.7. Occupation of land .....	65
4.8. Women’s body and safety .....	70
4.8.1. Recognition of fatherhood.....	70
4.8.2. Violence .....	71
4.8.3. Sexual abuse.....	72
4.8.4. Sexual exploitation.....	75
4.9 Security measures – repressive methods .....	78
PART II.....	81
4.10. Resistance to the Belo Monte dam: women at the grassroots .....	81
4.10.1 Women’s participation in struggle for rights .....	82
4.10.2 Women: weak in politics, strong in movements .....	83
4.10.3 Women and education.....	90
4.11. The role of MAB in woman’s rights struggles.....	92
4.11.1 MAB’s agenda for women: participation and organization at the grassroots .....	94
4.11.2. Claims and spaces for action .....	97
4.11.3. Achievements and challenges .....	103
5. Conclusions .....	111
Bibliography.....	115
Appendix 1. List of interviews.....	123

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The main socio-environmental conflict in Brazil for last three decades is the Belo Monte mega-dam in the Amazon region. It is the principal project of Brazil's Growth Acceleration Program (Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento - PAC), located in a region previously abandoned by the state and a standing symbol of social and environmental destruction and disregard for the people affected (ISA 2015). Although the premises of the Belo Monte project is narrated through guarantees of national development and progress, indigenous groups and social movements have opposed the dam from the start because of the illegalities committed during planning and implementation of the project as well as its evident consequences for local peoples and communities, vulnerable to sudden and vast socio-environmental change (Braun 2015; Kuijpers 2013; McCully 2001; Roy 2001; Scudder & Colson 1982). Little attention however, has been paid to study how women, a particularly exposed group, experience the nature of dam-induced development. Dam-affected women are in general, overlooked both in terms of life-changing effects and their participation and claims against authoritarian decision-makers and biased processes that control such mega-dams as well as their accompanying projects for resettlement and compensations, which disrupt women's lives, families, livelihoods, communities and safety (Buechler et al. 2015; Kothari et al. 2005; Srinivasan 2004). "The large dam literature usually describes the project-affected person as a genderless entity, rather than as a woman or man with different interests and aspirations" (Mehta & Srinivasan 2000: 2). The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) have repeatedly, since the mid 1970's, called for more research and data on women's interests in global development issues to include them on the agenda for national and international policy debates (Farrior 2009). In Brazil however, anti-dam organizations and peasant women's movements have for several decades, addressed the severe implications large dams cause for women. According to the report *Affected by Dams* developed by the Special Committee of the Council for the Defence of the Human Individual (CDDPH), the promoters, builders and investors of dams in Brazil, severely violate human rights because of their inadequate social planning and lack of concern for the affected people's lives and losses. Large dams therefore aggravate already serious social, cultural and economic inequalities. The same report finds that women are the group most seriously and intensely affected because they lack means and solutions to reconstruct their lives after displacement. The poor and prejudiced planning, implementation and operation of dams, therefore, causes processes of impoverishment and marginalization that hit women harder than any other group in society



(CDDPH 2010: 54). Still, there are very few academic studies that consider the correlation of large dams, women and social and environmental justice (Braun 2015; Mehta & Srinivasan 2000). This study explores precisely these issues in the context of the Belo Mote mega-dam in the Eastern part of the Brazilian Amazon.

In June 2010, the license to build the Belo Monte hydropower dam, the third largest in the world, was granted after a thirty yearlong polemic debate in Brazil. The project's size, magnitude in public funding, private investments, accumulation of resources, its immense environmental destruction and human impacts has given this case international attention (Fearnside 2006; Jaichand & Sampaio 2013). As mentioned, little notice has been given, to study how women, are impacted in different ways during (and likely well beyond) the construction period, and how they participate and act for reform and change for those affected. What is constantly being devalued are local people's needs to protect their cultural and traditional ways of subsistence and more than any, those of vulnerable groups, women amongst them. This research, therefore, aims to contribute reducing this information-gap by producing new, applicable information about the Belo Monte dam, women and social and environmental justice. These issues are relevant because it concerns thousands of women's struggle for just distribution, recognition and inclusion in decision-making processes in the current conflict about the Belo Monte dam and in other conflicts over large dams worldwide. It is also an important issue for the future, because the Belo Monte dam sets a precedent for the implementation processes of 30 new dams projected in the Amazon region for the next twenty years (Fearnside 2015). This study constitutes an effort to join gender perspectives with social and environmental justice theory from the ground up, based on first-hand information compiled from field-research in areas affected by the Belo Monte dam.

### **1.1. Objectives and research questions**

This study has the following two objectives, from which derive the corresponding research questions:

**Objective 1:** To know the impacts that the Belo Monte mega-dam has on local women, and to study why and how these impacts occur.

Taking the conceptual frameworks of gender and the three dimensions of social and environmental justice (distribution, recognition, participation), I will first investigate how “local” is regulated by the interests behind the Belo Monte dam and how these mark, in terms of poor distribution of resources and social and cultural misrecognition, the situation of dam-affected women and the local communities in general.

**Research question 1:** How do affected women, public servants and activists, experience the transformations caused by the Belo Monte dam and their effects on women?

**Objective 2:** To learn how affected women, involved in social movements, react to the effects of the Belo Monte hydropower dam, and what results their struggle has given.

In order to accomplish this objective, I examine the participation of women in social movements to fight for recognition, change and reform in relation to affected people’s rights and especially those of women. As such, I analyze the work the Movement of Dam-Affected People’s (MAB) at different scales to protect people’s rights and interests. Women’s initiatives in the Movement will be highlighted.

**Research question 2:** How do women, linked to social movements, react to the effects of the Belo Monte dam, and what are the results of their struggle?

## **1.2. Structure of the thesis**

The second chapter which follows, explains the area of study and it outlines the methodology and development of the research. Chapter 3 introduces the theoretical framework and describes the main concepts used in the study, which include the gender perspective and social and environmental justice theories. Chapter 4 presents the results and discussion of the thesis in view of the theoretical frameworks as presented in Chapter 3. This chapter is introduced by providing background information about the legal controversies that surround the expropriation, consultation and licensing processes, in which made the Belo Monte project possible and provoked the impacts and conflict. Next follows the two parts of the thesis: Part I presents and discuss the results that aim to fulfil the first objective: *To know the impacts that the Belo Monte mega-dam has on local women, and to study why and how these impacts occur*. Part II presents and discuss the results that correspond to the second objective: *To*

*learn how affected women, involved in social movements, react to the effects of the Belo Monte hydropower dam, and what results their struggle has given.* In this second part, I analyse the way dam-affected women, linked to social movements, organize and react to the social transformations of the Belo Monte dam and how they direct their claims for recognition. I study the way women find support and contribute in social movements, focusing on the *Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens* (MAB – Movement of People Affected by Dams, Brazil) and the way this Movement campaigns for justice, recognition and participation, in line with the theories used in this research study. This way, the information obtained in Part I provides the key arguments of the study that concern understanding how and why gendered impacts are misrecognized in the Belo Monte distribution struggle. In Part II, I analyse how women participate for change and reform through participation in social movements. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Project background and research approach

My personal background and set of beliefs on issues revolving dams and affected women and people has helped navigating the progress of the research project. My understanding of distribution conflicts caused by the construction of large dams agree with the transformative outlook, that contest imposed structural policies and laws that tramples on marginalized groups, raising questions about issues of power and social justice (Creswell 2013) . This has to do with the years I was employed in “*Fundación Nueva Cultura del Agua*” (FNCA) <http://www.fnca.eu>, which is a Spanish non-profit organization constituted by 200 members from universities, research institutions, public administration, private sector and civil society. FNCA promotes sustainable water policies and socially just water management through education, research projects, workshops, manifestations and artistic activities. I was employed to coordinate and participate in an international multi-media exhibition called *Water, Rivers and People* (Agua, Rios y Pueblos – ARP in Spanish acronym), which was about showing the human rights abuses resulting from mainstream environmental policies, and also to support the action agendas of dam-affected people’s movements around the world. Under the supervision of Dr. Pedro Arrojo (Goldman Environmental Prize 2003, University of Zaragoza), I carried out several photo-stories in Norway, Spain, Mexico and Peru for the photo exhibition and a book. In parallel, we were receiving photo-documentaries about other cases that other participants were sending from around the world. What I realised was that in every country and location where dams were planned or under construction, the same devastating problems occurred. I also learnt that the most dramatic element of all, in environmental conflicts, is the widespread disregard for people’s lives and losses and the invisibility and neglect of the human suffering that occur in parallel with big development projects, and that the only means affected people have in many places, is to join social movements in a common struggle to confront social oppression and to change policies. The years I worked and learnt with the *Water, Rivers and People* project have been decisive for the choice of topic for this thesis.

The *Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens* (MAB – Movement of People Affected by Dams, Brazil) participated in the ARP exhibition to the Río+20 summit in Rio de Janeiro in

2013, showing it in the pavilion for civil society. The collaboration with MAB brought me to São Paulo and the Brazilian Amazon for the first time. A number of international collaborators, activists, sponsors and people from the academia were attending this meeting, and in this context, MAB had arranged field trips to visit areas impacted by large dams and to talk to local people affected by them. I joined the fieldtrip that went to the Xingu River where Belo Monte was under construction and to the Tapajós river that are under threat by a chain of large dams.

The field-trip to the Xingu and Tapajos basins in the fall of 2013 was coordinated and organized by the Amazonian unit of MAB. In the Xingu basin territory, they arranged meetings with affected people in their homes in Altamira, by the trans-Amazonian highway and in the occupied land in Brazil Novo. We visited the massive construction site of Belo Monte, and we rented a boat to see the Xingu river and some islands and forest that shortly would be flooded. Then we flew over to the Tapajós River where we visited a remote riverside village and several Munduruku villages, to speak to the indigenous people about their situation regarding the planned dams on the Tapajós River and some of its tributaries. In both cities, Altamira and Itaituba, MAB arranged meetings where people from civil society, indigenous groups, university, farmers (some of them landless), youth organization, black women's movement, public officers and priests linked to MAB, attended. Without going into the details of this trip, as I have used a limited amount of collected data for the thesis, it was very important as a foundation for the field-work carried out in July 2015, because it gave me the opportunity to better understand the social and environmental dynamics of the Amazon by visiting dam-affected areas and talking to people who live there and listen to their concerns and experiences. It was also my contacts in MAB who told me about the women's platform within MAB that had been initiated to include more women in the movement, arrange activities such as a national meeting for women, demonstrations and making political encounters where they presented and further developed the demands of the affected women. A wide range of activities were arranged for and by women because MAB had seen over the years that women are more directly and intensely affected by large dams than men. Many of the contacts I got in 2013, were interviewed during field-work in 2015, and many of them helped me to connect with other key informants. MAB in this respect, was a door-opener because when they introduced me to affected people, social movements and other respondents, I felt that people were more willing to share their thoughts and experiences, when I was introduced by people they trusted. It was also an advantage having met many of

the affected people and people in social movements in 2013, I believe that this was important as well, to see that I was still working with questions of the affected people's situation and claims, and theirs in particular. In the first field-trip in 2013, the Belo Monte dam was under construction but the Xingu was still running free, but in 2015, the dam was almost ready and many areas were already flooded by the reservoir. Therefore, I had the opportunity to interview several of the respondents before and after expropriation and resettlement.

This study is based on qualitative research methods, which are suitable to answer this study's research questions exposed in the previous section. Qualitative research, according to Creswell "is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (2013: 4), and it allows for a broader and less restrictive design than other research approaches. Usually, a research design consists of linear sequences of steps, starting with a problem statement, objectives, research questions, data collection stages, analysis and interpretations of the data and findings by the support of existing theories and literature (Creswell 2013; Maxwell 2008). An entirely different strategy, known as the "garbage can" model, attempts to capture some of the chaos of many research studies. This model focuses attention on the way a choice changes over time as a result of the interaction of data, theories, methods, resources and solutions during the course of research without following a fixed design (Cohen et al. 1972; Grady & Wallston 1988). As such, this study certainly felt chaotic and out of control at times after the field trip and data-collection had been carried out, mainly because of large amount of data and feeling uncertain about how to frame the research theoretically. The solution in the middle of chaos, was landing on the choice of employing inductive content analysis as a tool to extract, define, organize and structure the findings, allowing the descriptive data (messages, perceptions, views and experiences etc.) to open the path for the research.

As mentioned, before the analysis had been carried out, I had not been able to find the right theory that could frame the findings and support the discussion. My first intention was to employ a feminist political ecology framework, but I was struggling to make this framework convey the objective of the study and answer the research questions. The messages of the respondents (findings) thus, made it clear what issues in the study were important to highlight, examine and discuss further. From the findings then, I found that the conceptual frameworks of gender and social and environmental justice would provide an overall positioning of the study in terms of the effects caused by the Belo Monte dam on women as well as their actions for change and reform. For the above reasons, I didn't follow a linear-designed strategy, but

rather a flexible and non-sequential approach was driving the work, where the steps after completing data-collection such as analysing data, adjusting theory, sharpening the research questions, discussing and writing up were going on simultaneously, each task influencing the others (Maxwell 2008). Meaning in qualitative research then, derive from the way people perceive their own and other people's situation, and importantly, also from the researcher's *worldviews*. (Berg & Lune 2012; Creswell 2013).

The broader ideas of this study draw on *the transformative worldview*, which is an approach used by researchers who focus on social justice and struggles for human rights and who believe that research should involve politics and political change agendas to confront social oppression at different scales. The transformative approach, just like this research, focus on the experiences and perceptions of individuals within marginalized groups, and particularly “how their lives have been constrained by oppressors and the strategies that they use to resist, challenge and subvert these constraints” (Mertens 2010 cited in Creswell 2013: 10). When studying a particular group (dam-affected women), the researchers who are guided by transformative worldview, link political and social action to the inequalities that affects the group being studied. Also, they often give the participants a voice to the outside world as well as supporting their struggle when the researcher can contribute strengthening their agenda for social change and inclusion (Creswell 2013). In this study, the transformative worldview has helped shaping the research objective, and the qualitative methods have provided important tools to advance towards this objective.

## **2.2. Study area and Belo Monte dam**

The research for this study took place in the Xingu River Basin in the North of Brazil (Fig. 1). I circumscribed the study to the municipalities of Altamira and Brazil Novo in the state of Pará because a large portion of people affected by Belo Monte dam live in these municipalities and in Altamira city. A majority of the interviews were carried out in Altamira, which is a small city situated on the shores of the Xingu River, a tributary of the Amazon river. A few interviews were conducted in the occupied camp of Novo Horizonte in the municipality of Brazil Novo. Altamira and Brazil Novo municipalities are home to different groups of people, including indigenous, ribeirinhos (riverside communities), quilombolas (African decedents), urban fisher folks and peasant workers. The Amazonian peoples have an

inherent relation to the Xingu river and their diverse cultures and societies depend on the biodiversity of the rainforest and the natural cycles and yields of the river for their self-subsistence, livelihoods and household economies.

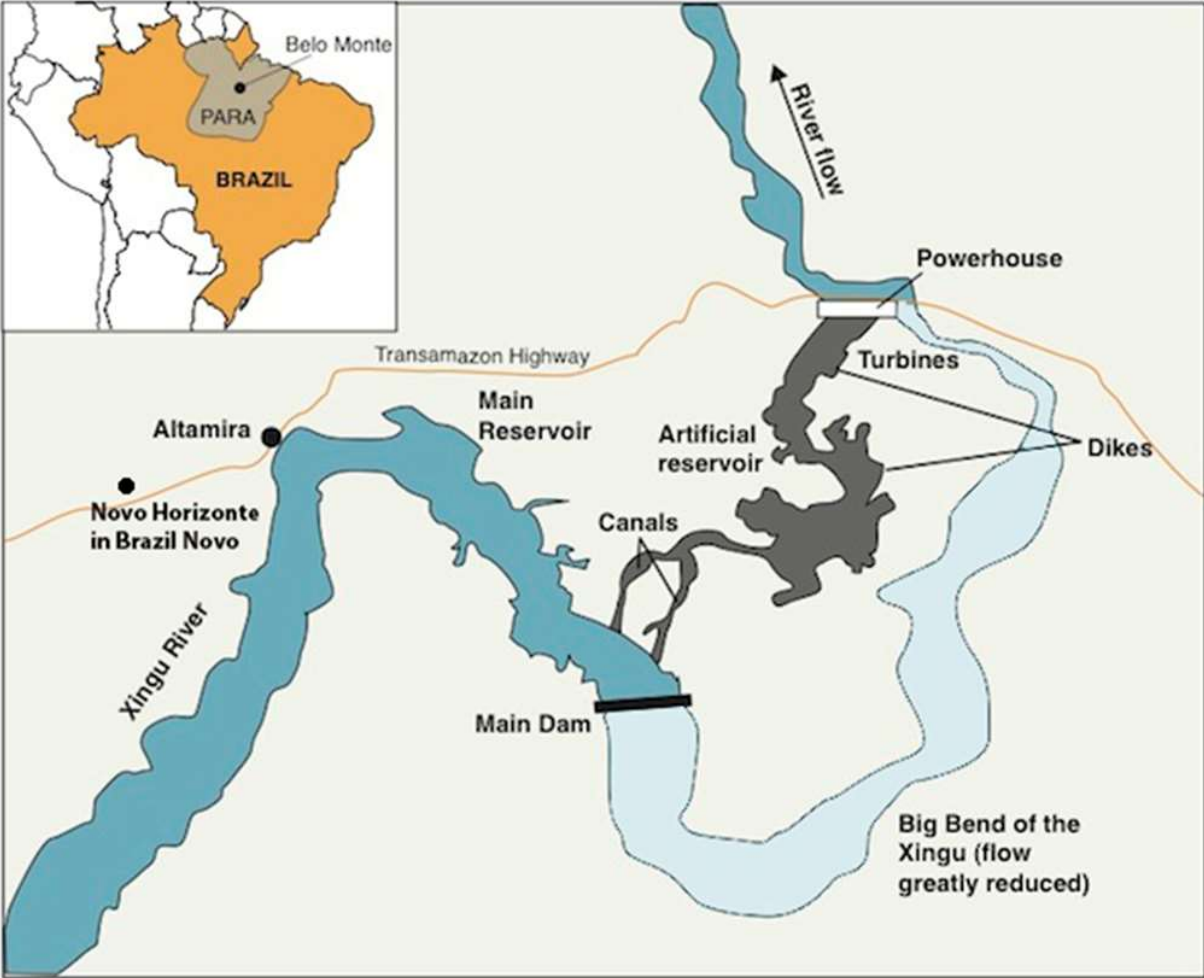


Fig. 1. Altamira, Novo Horizonte in Brazil Novo and Belo Monte region. Source: Rio Times (2013).

The Belo Monte hydroelectric plant was officially opened on the 5th of May 2016 by President Dilma Rousseff, and is the world's third largest dam with installed capacity of 11,233.1 MW, only behind China's Three Gorges dam and the Itaipú binational located on the border between Brazil and Paraguay. The Belo Monte consists of two large dams, two large reservoirs and supporting dikes. Due to the design of the Belo Monte complex, the flow within a 10 km stretch of the river called *Volta Grande* (Big Bend) will be totally changed (Hall & Branford 2012). As shown in Fig.1, a large dam and two 500 meters wide and 75 km

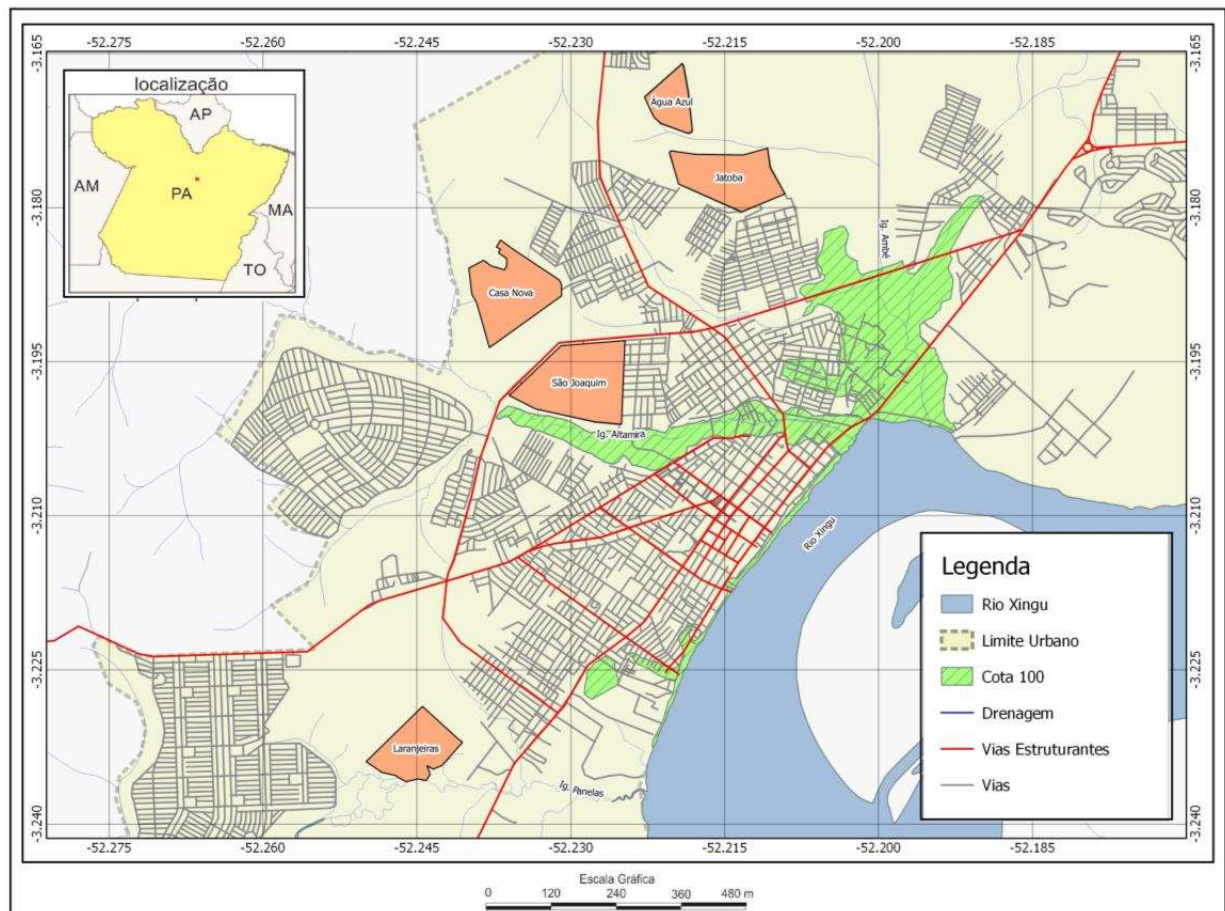


long canals cut Volta Grande off of the Xingu River, transferring most of the river's flow to an artificial lake before it is lead into the turbines at the Belo Monte site. These canals divert 80% of the Xingu River from its course, with the result of changing the lives and livelihoods of traditional communities, fishermen and indigenous peoples who live in this stretch of the river. As a consequence of the change in the Big Bend, several fish species that exist only in this stretch of the river are likely to disappear and it will become difficult for traditional and indigenous people to access the city of Altamira at to sell their yields and do other tasks. "The Xingu River is essential for the subsistence of the riverine communities, as fish is their most important source of protein and the river is the only mode of transport in these isolated areas. Furthermore, the lowering of the water table will destroy the agricultural production of the region and affect water quality and the rainforest in a much larger region" (Kuijpers et al. 2014: 790). Above the main dam, the reservoirs are currently being filled and they will eventually inundate 516 km<sup>2</sup> of land, of this is 400 km<sup>2</sup> standing rainforest. According to International Rivers, as much as 1,500 square kilometres of forest will be affected as a consequence of the raised water level (2012). The projected filling of the reservoir to its planned full height would flood not only thousands of acres of rainforest but also a part of Altamira city and more dispersed populated areas in the municipalities Altamira, Vitória do Xingu and Brazil Novo.

In Altamira, around 25% of the city's urban area will be flooded, and the residents who live below the 100-meter altitude level (green areas in Fig. 2) of the dam have the right to choose between being resettled or compensated. At least 22,000 people, including 1400 indigenous people from different communities have been evicted, and about 500 people who live in areas affected by the reservoir is fighting for their right to housing (MAB 2016b; Neto 2014). People have mainly been transferred to urban resettlements (red areas in Fig. 2), some of these are as far as 7 km from the river and city centre. Many families in Altamira city however, live from fishing and depend on easy access to the river.

Before the resettlement process started, the city underwent a strong population growth due to the immigration of male workers that came to work on the construction of Belo Monte; its inhabitants raised from 99.000 in 2010 to 150.000 in 2013 (Estronioli 2013). In recent years, Altamira city has become troubled with rising rates of violence, property entitlement frauds, land clearance, invasion of indigenous lands, drug trafficking, and sexual exploitation amongst many other social problems. All these issues have been escalating after the initiation of the construction of the Belo Monte dam. The *Environmental Impact Assessment* (EIA) that

was carried out for the project, did not take this reality into account and limited the impact area of Belo Monte strictly to the areas along the Xingu that would be flooded (Kuijpers et al. 2014).



**Fig. 2.** Location of urban resettlement areas in Altamira (marked in red, flooded areas in green). Source: GEDTAM, 2014 (Neto 2014).

### 2.3. Sampling approach

In qualitative studies, nonprobability samples are generally used, which means that researchers select participants who are likely to have information about a specific phenomenon that the average population not necessarily know much about (Berg & Lune 2012). Qualitative researchers are looking for good respondents that are informed, clear, knowledgeable to uncover underlying principles and patterns in the perceptions and ways of reasoning of the informants (Flyvbjerg 2006). There are different approaches of nonprobability sampling and I

used a mix of them at different stages of the project development.

The materials collected in my first trip to the areas of study in 2013 can be considered as coming from a *convenience sample*, also called *accidental sample*, when I met potential participants for the study. I include the interviews and conversations that were carried out in 2013 in this category even if I had not yet decided that the study should focus on affected women. In this first trip, I interviewed a lot of people that MAB had assembled and therefore were easily available (Berg & Lune 2012). These persons shared their thoughts and gave a lot of valuable information about the social impacts generated by the Belo Monte dam. The conversations were conducted with the intention to extract as much information as possible with the time and setting available, and I filmed all of them.

This footage was used to prepare the proper field-work, and before returning to Altamira in 2015, I contacted some of these persons by email, others I called after arrival to ask them to participate in the study, this time with a clear focus and better prepared questions. Then, I carried out a *purposive sampling* procedure where I used my understanding and contacts in Altamira to select respondents who were, or could add information about dam-affected women and their lived experiences. In parallel, I also made use of *snowball sampling* where respondents that were already participating in the study put me in contact with new respondents that could provide new or distinct information. Due to the limited time I stayed in Altamira, snowball sampling showed to be both practical and efficient. I was able to contact certain groups of women, civil society or public officers that were crucial to include in the study. It was much easier to establish confidence with new participants when I was introduced by people of their own confidence (Berg & Lune 2012). A disadvantage may have been that most of my initial contacts were all linked to the MAB, and therefore it is possible that the perceptions and lived experiences of many of the participants were biased by the philosophy of this movement. I did my best to balance this by talking to affected women from other organizations like environmental, feminist and black women's movements and respondents that were introduced to me and that were not directly involved in the MAB organization.

## **2.4. Interviews**

The methods I used to collect primary data were semi-structured interviews and recordings of meetings and forums. As mentioned above, data collection happened in two periods; two

weeks in October 2013 and two weeks in July 2015. The first-hand data collected in 2013 was mainly used for the preparation of this study and field-work, however I included punctual information that could broaden certain issues for the analysis. During field-work in 2015, I carried out semi-structured interviews, sometimes accompanied by my contact at MAB or alone with the respondents at their work or in a place of their choice so they were comfortable to share their insights and experiences relevant to this study. In total, I carried out twenty-five interviews, of which eighteen were conducted in 2015 and six were conducted in both 2013 and 2015 and one in 2013 (see interview guide for clarification). I also included selected fragments of two speeches that were recorded in MAB's National Meeting for Dam-Affected People in 2013.

Because of the complexity of the research topic, and to maintain the focus when guiding all the interviews and conversations, it was necessary to have an inquiry guide at hand with central open-ended questions in line with the objective of the research. In this way, I could keep a certain pattern on key topics to be covered in the interviews without imposing a track for the conversations based on my own prior understanding of the objectives of the study, but rather try to discover how the respondents thought and felt about the issues in question (Berg & Lune 2012). I also treated every informant as an individual, without linking them to any social group, ethnicity or social movement. Often, the interviews developed spontaneously into open conversations only asking open questions when something was unclear or when it was relevant to broaden the explanations on certain topics. I slightly changed my questions during field-work according to what I learnt by talking to the different informants. Therefore, I didn't usually follow a specific order when asking questions, but rather placing follow-up questions when needed or introducing other aspects to the interview. Some persons were more reserved and responded briefly and punctual to questions, and in these situations the questionnaires turned out to be very useful. The semi-structured interviews thus allowed for setting the theme and guide the progress of the conversations according to the research topic. Giving freedom of the different interviewee to structure the answers (conversation), enhanced varied and interesting findings that helped understanding the implications of the Belo Monte dam on women from the subject's perspective, also enabling comparisons across the interviews (Berg & Lune 2012).

I video-recorded all interviews (with two exceptions), always with the consent of the interviewees. I put the camera on a tripod, adjusted the sound and image and left it recording while conducting the interviews without paying much attention to the camera, but I explained

my reasons for filming. One person did not agree to be filmed and only the sound was recorded for professional reasons. In another occasion a person seemed to be affected by it, and I took notes instead of filming. I did not observe that people took much notice of it, many of the people I spoke to were used to speak in public, and they were very happy to participate in this study that concerned their situation. Having film- or sound recorded the interviews was a great advantage for me and for those who helped with the translations, as everything was transcribed in detail in English. Reviewing the footage during analysis also made it possible to include people's gestures and tone of voice when emphasising certain issues.

## **2.5. Data analysis**

The transcripts (and footage) were examined by means of *content analysis*, which is a flexible method broadly used to describe and interpret data produced during research of written and visual messages (White & Marsh 2006). According to Berg & Lune "Content analysis is a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings" (2012: 349-350). Generally, content analysis is performed on different types of communications such as texts, transcripts, photographs, video and audio recordings (Berg & Lune 2012). The transcribed interviews also included notes on gestures, signs of sentiments and tone of voice to make emphasis or add information to the study.

Elo and Kyngäs (2008) explains that content analysis usually is conducted in an *deductive* or *inductive* way, dependent on the purpose of the study and existing information. I conducted an *inductive* analysis because the literature and information on the topic are limited and disperse, but mainly because this approach provides direct information from the contestants without imposing predetermined categories or theoretical perspectives of the empirical data, which is an advantage when searching for patterns of participant's feelings, perceptions and lived experiences in the particular context of the Belo Monte dam (Hsieh & Shannon 2005).

Inductive content analysis is an approach where key points and meanings (such as words, thoughts, concepts and emotional reactions) are identified in the raw data, then coded and classified into a set of categories. After this open coding, the categories that emerged, were grouped and sorted under headings and sub-headings to reduce the number of categories by fusing related themes under wider groupings without eliminating relevant aspects of the

respondent's message (Berg & Lune 2012; Elo & Kyngäs 2008). The purpose of creating categories is to provide a system that describe and provide new insights about one or several phenomenon, and most importantly, to answer the research questions (Berg & Lune 2012; Elo & Kyngäs 2008; Robson 1993; White & Marsh 2006). The criteria of selecting and including data was first of all determined by its applicability to answer the research questions and to add information that revealed social patterns, relationships and processes linked to the research questions (Berg & Lune 2012; White & Marsh 2006). I used the three dimensions of social and environmental justice, namely, *distribution*, *recognition* and *participation* (Schlosberg 2003; Schlosberg 2009) to frame the discussion that transpired from the findings. I divided the environmental justice framework in two parts according the research questions: Justice in the context of *recognition* and *distribution* framed the findings and discussion of RQ 1: *How do people who live in affected areas of the Belo Monte dam think about dam-induced development and its effects on women?* and questions of *justice and participation* framed RQ 2: *How do women, linked to social movements, react to the effects of the Belo Monte dam, and what are the results of their struggle?* As these concepts are interconnected and cannot be seen independently to understand the fundamentals for social and environmental justice, all the three dimensions were mentioned in both parts of discussion, although the main structure is as explained above. The analytical framework is summarized in Fig. 3.

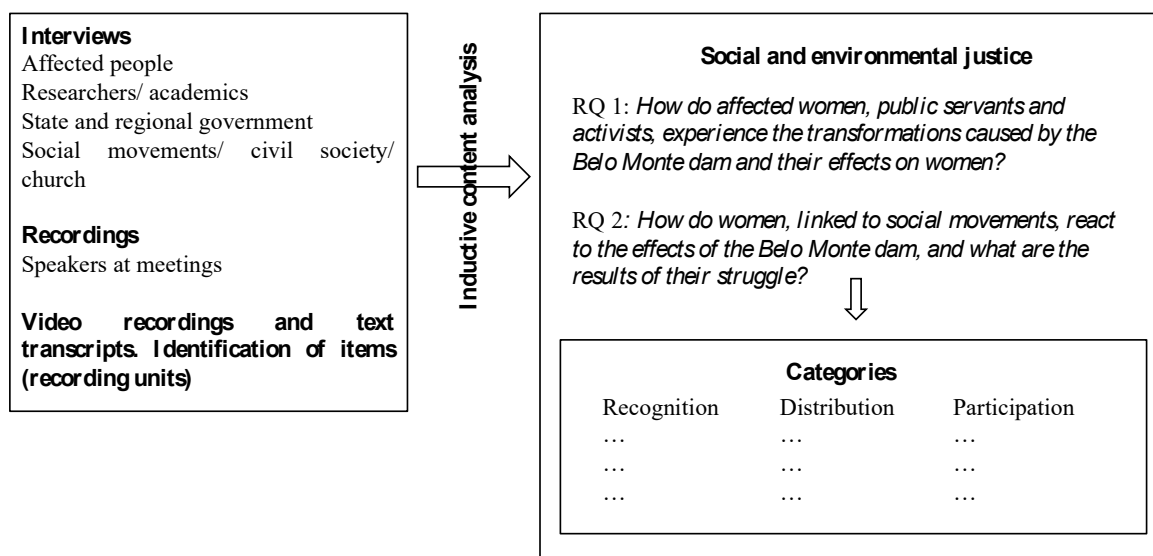


Fig. 3. Scheme of the analytical framework.

## **2.6. Limitations of the study**

This research is an attempt to study social transformation and civil actions in the context of the Belo Monte dam, as experienced by women, within the perspective of gender and three dimensions of social and environmental justice framework. Other theories could also have been used to broaden the knowledge on this phenomenon such as feminist political ecology and feminist political economy. These theories direct attention towards power relations, scales, social, environmental and economic sustainability, scarcity, politics, poverty and social justice from a gendered lens. Many of these issues are mentioned as they overlap the conceptual framework of this study, but not studied in depth, because I needed to limit and focus the study according the scope of this thesis.

Other limitations concern the concept of gender, which includes all individuals and human relations in a society. In the case of the population affected by the Belo Monte dam, both women and men are part of vulnerable groups. Still, women are often more intensely impacted than men, which give rise to specific problems (that relates to the fact of being women), which men also share but experience differently. I have deliberately avoided discussions on comparisons between the situation of women and men, because it is not the focus of this study. The concept of gender (also when focusing on women), addresses diversity in plural societies as this concept crosscuts women with differences in ethnicity, race, religion, age and class. (Cossman 1990; Momsen 2010). Studying affected women as a homogenous group in such a diverse society as the one in the Pará region is not optimal, and therefore, I cannot claim that this study is representative for all groups of women in Altamira and the surrounding region, but only the sample-groups, which are dam-affected women and men (from different ethnicities and cultural groups) linked to social movements and state officials that work with affected people on a regular basis. This is an important limitation although it is probable that the sample-group represent a large number of women from different backgrounds in Altamira. The informants of this study however, belong to different groups of the population such as indigenous, riverine, peasant, black as well as different urban and rural groups of women. I have not made any distinctions between their experiences because of their background because I do not have enough empirical data to do such a division for the analysis.

An important restriction of this thesis concerns crimes against socio-environmental activists that live under the fear of murder, violence or criminalization for showing openly their opposition. According to Global Witness, a UK-based watchdog, Brazil was the deadliest country for environmental activists in 2015, with 50 people murdered for their activism, 40% of these were indigenous people that were protecting their life-supporting resources (Holmes 2016). I do not however, have enough data to study how these threats affect women in affected areas in particular. It is a major human-rights problem that affects activists in the Belo Monte context and also many other campaigners and indigenous peoples that oppose other extraction projects such as mining, illegal loggers and plantation owners in Pará and all over Latin America.

Another limitation of the study is not having included interviews with Norte Energia who developed the Basic Environmental Plan (PBA - Plano Básico Ambiental) or the federal agency IBAMA (The Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources), which is under the Ministry of Environment and responsible for granting the environmental license for any project that degrade the environment. As a consequence, the claims made against Norte Energia and IBAMA have not been triangulated. Further, I was slightly limited by the safety precautions I had to take during fieldwork in a city known for being violent, especially being foreign and when I was on my own. I had to cancel some interviews for this reason, and there is especially one interview that I regret not being able to carry out, of an indigenous family from the Arara tribe who had been resettled in one of the areas furthest away from the river (about 7 km), and who had lost three of their children because they could not access medical care.





### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1. Bridging gender and social and environmental justice theories

The analytical approach of this research, assumes that Brazil's societies, power structures and social relations contain deeply rooted gender divisions, which makes women especially vulnerable to the sudden social and environmental changes caused by the Belo Monte dam. With this backdrop, the two research questions involve issues on women and how dam-induced transformations affect them. They also concern women's participation and actions in a broader fight for just compensations, public policies and regulations, which remain unnoticed in dominant ideologies that assumes a top-down view on development. Theories on *environmental justice* and the *social and environmental justice movement* emerged and were shaped by the principles and actions of social movements that fought against environmental mismanagement and crimes to protect citizen's rights of marginalised people. For this reason, they are central in understanding dam-affected women's position in Altamira and Novo Horizonte in the municipality of Brazil Novo (where the study takes place). The framework of environmental justice then has two uses that are highly related. The first and most common form, describes social movements that, broadly speaking, focus on the fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. They centre on the participation of local and minority groups of trying to change a powerful system to prevent companies from conducting environmental damaging practices in areas where a high number of minorities and ethnicities are living (Bullard 2000; Schlosberg 2004; 2009). The second form of environmental justice refers to an interdisciplinary social science, that includes theories of the environment, society, justice, environmental law and governance, environmental policy and planning, development, sustainability, and political ecology (Miller & Spoolman 2007; Schlosberg 2009).

This study centres on the *three dimensions of social and environmental justice* theory, namely *distribution, recognition and participation*, which have been interpreted through a gender perspective. These three principles show the complexity of justice and offer explanations of the causes of distribution conflicts and how they could be solved, in which links to the philosophy and struggle of social movements. Part I centres on the *distribution and recognition* concepts of justice, and Part II focus on *participation*. Although the gender perspective is linked to the three dimensions of social and environmental justice theory, I

focus on women, rather than speaking of gender relations or feminism. Analysing the findings by the use of the gender perspective of environmental justice framework then, is the focus for the discussion of this study.

### **3.2. The gender perspective**

Gender as a perspective within cultural, social and human sciences, emerged in the late twentieth century to explain the inequalities between men and women in society. In this study, interrogations on gender are considered in the perspective of social and environmental justice, which is relevant in order to study the situation for women, especially in the context of the implementation of large dams. There has been a considerable amount of research that shows the negative human and social cost of neoliberal economic policies, where the state is being hollowed out by organs of global governance and international capital whose interest is to build dams as investments and to provide energy to other sectors such as mining and industrial agriculture (Evans 2011). In this process, natural resources (such as land and water in rivers) have been privatized and brought to the market and turned into attractive business opportunities and thereby speeding up an unsustainable use of these resources, impacting more than any the most vulnerable sectors of society (Arrojo 2006). Some research have also considered the gender dimension of neoliberal economic structures, showing that women disproportionately bear the cost of these changes (Buechler & Hanson 2015; MAB 2011; McCully 2001; Mehta & Srinivasan 2000; O'brien & Williams 2016; Scudder & Colson 1982; WCD 2000).

The concept of gender refers to the social roles that identify women and men from their natural difference. Jill Steans points out that: “gender does not refer to what men and women are biologically, but to the ideological and material relations which exist between them” (Steans 1998 p. 10). Gender should be understood then as the social and cultural organization that societies consider distinctive female or male regarding their roles, responsibilities, behaviours, activities and qualities. (O'brien & Williams 2016). Gender also means gender identity, stressing the notion of multiple identities, including people who step out of their socially given gender roles such as transgender persons (Momsen 2010). Although this study doesn't talk about transgender persons, the point is that the concept of gender includes other identities than just women or men (Butler 2004). Nevertheless, the gender perspective mostly

refers to male and female, and it offers an analytical tool to understand processes that creates difference, and opens up to analysing limitations and opportunities that are different for men and for women in different social settings. Gender roles vary around the world (although some responsibilities like domestic work and childcare seems to be the similar in most cultures) and they are sensitive to the changes brought by large development projects and may change women's opportunities or practices in domains like within the family, daily life, communities, cultures, institutions and politics (Momsen 2010). Critical theorist and philosopher Nancy Fraser understands gender as a two-sided category, which involves both an economic dimension and a cultural dimension. In order to understand why and how social and environmental injustice impact women, it is necessary to consider gender from the perspectives of distribution and recognition. The distributive perspective in relation to gender, according to Fraser, sets a basic standard to organize labour in society that divides between the higher paid male labour which is seen as "productive", and the low- or unpaid "reproductive" female that includes domestic labour and childcare. "The result is an economic structure that generates gender-specific forms of distributive injustice" (Fraser 2007: 26). From the recognition perspective, Fraser sees gender as a status differentiation where gender injustice derives from established authoritarian constructed norms that benefit the "masculine" and discriminate the "feminine". As these norms are customary in many places, women suffer gender specific status abuses, including discrimination at work, domestic violence, sexual assaults, provocations in daily life, and marginalization and exclusion in public domains. "These harms are injustices of misrecognition (...) they cannot be overcome by redistribution alone but require additional independent remedies of recognition" (Fraser 2007: 26). Claims for redistribution of costs and benefits as well as recognition of difference are amongst the main concerns that fuel women's participation in social and environmental conflicts. In this study, the gender perspective provides a tool to explore how the status of *women* have changed in the context of the effects of the Belo Monte dam, and how affected women approach the struggle to obtain social and environmental justice.

### **3.3. Social and environmental justice**

Environmental justice is a concept that evolved from local conflicts against environmental racism into the objectives of environmental policy-making and law enforcement. The aim of environmental justice advocates is to ensure that all people, regardless of gender, race,

ethnicity and class, are protected from impacts of resource extraction and environmental hazards as well as discrimination in the enforcement of environmental laws and regulations amongst many other afflictions. Another goal is to include affected people in the making of environmental and public policies and legislations (Fraser 2001; Holifield 2001; Schlosberg 2003; Young 1990). The academic field of environmental justice and the movement with the same name, derive from the United States in the early 1970's, from a number of local conflicts against massive dumping of environmental hazards, led by African American grassroots groups, claiming their rights to live in a healthy environment (Holifield 2001). "They began to treat their struggle for environmental equity as a struggle against institutionalized racism and an extension of the quest for social justice" (Bullard & Wright 1987: 32-33). The first national protests against the landfill in Afton in Warren County in 1982 is emblematic in this respect. The Afton community had been selected as a burial site for more than 24,500 square meters of soil contaminated by polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB's) that had been illegally dumped along the roads of fourteen North Carolina counties in 1978. The major issue in terms of justice was that more than 84% of the population in Afton community were African Americans, and amongst the poorest in North Carolina (Bullard 2000). Robert Bullard claimed that the selected sites for the toxic dumping in Afton and the United States in general, was a strategy he called "path of least resistance", where the politically strong took advantage of the exposed position of black communities that had no means to face politicians to stop practices of toxic dumping or deal with the consequences of contamination (Bullard 2000; Holifield 2001). The Warren County conflict, shows that the civil rights framework have many parallels with environmental justice, and it also confirm that environmental conflicts first of all, are about justice, contesting environmental inequality and devastation to protect marginalized and poor populations (Schlosberg 2009). The environmental justice principles have since then been integrated in the claims of social and environmental movements worldwide as a response to the human and ecological injustices brought on by the neoliberal economic policies and globalization. In these conflicts people demand fair distribution of costs and benefits, recognition of difference and participation in decision-making processes by the people whose lives and livelihoods rely on the environment, and for those that need a series of incentives to rebuild their lives after environmental impacts.

### 3.3.1. *The three dimensions of social and environmental justice*

Three central dimensions coexist in current theories on social and environmental justice namely: *distribution*, *recognition* and *participation* (Fraser 1999; 2001; Schlosberg 2003; 2009). The *distribution* concept is rooted in the political-economic structure of society and involves equity in cost-benefit share of resources, assets and capabilities (Barry 1995; Fraser 1995; Rawls 1971; Schlosberg 2009; Young 1990). *Recognition* involves accepting difference amongst people so that every women and men are respected as full citizens regardless of their social, cultural, ethnical and economic background (Honneth 2004; Schlosberg 2003; Young 1990). *Participation* refers to the inclusion of all parties in decision-making processes so that everyone can obtain information and voice their interests in projects and practices that affect them. None of these three notions can assure social and environmental justice alone, hence what is needed is environmental politics that include them all (Fraser 2001; Schlosberg 2009).

The general understanding of social and environmental justice is often limited to the issue of equity in the distribution of costs and benefits. This perhaps stem from the influential work of John Rawls called *A Theory of Justice*, seen by many as the pillar for later discussions on social and environmental justice (Michelbach et al. 2003). Broadly speaking, Rawls centres on the importance of fair processes (Schlosberg 2004) and claims that well-organized societies will construct fair distribution practices. He defines justice as “a standard whereby the distributive aspects of the basic structure of society are to be assessed” (Rawls 1971: 9). Translating the theory of Rawls into a social and environmental context, what Rawls believed was that justice is conditioned by the measures democracies would take to guarantee all citizens a just share of costs and benefits of environmental assets, as well as assuring people to exercise their basic rights and freedoms. The understanding of justice by another scholar, Brian Barry, differ from that of Rawls by stressing the importance of creating clear rules and principles that should determine the rights and duties of different parties. Fair systems and processes should set the standards for just allocation of costs and benefits, and rules would guide just institutions (Barry 1995 in Schlosberg 2004). Other academics such as Iris Young and Nancy Fraser, recognize distribution as one of the key aspects of justice, but think that justice has to be understood beyond the “distribution paradigm”. As Young puts it: “While distributional issues are crucial to a satisfactory conclusion of justice, it is a mistake to reduce social justice to distribution” (1990: 1). Fraser’s general argument is that “justice today requires both redistribution and recognition, as neither alone is sufficient” (Fraser 1999: 5).

Fraser who is known for her theory about the increasing demand for recognition of differences amongst people and cultural groups that don't adjust to the dominant majority, thinks that struggles for recognition are suppressed by the claims for economic redistribution (Fraser 1995; Robeyns 2003). Fraser argues that distribution and recognition cannot replace each other because they derive from two distinct sets of values; "distribution" has to do with the allocation of economic or livelihood supporting assets and "recognition" derives from the respect for- and acceptance of differences inherent in people, such as cultural identity, ethnicity and gender (Fraser 1995). Further, she introduces the idea of *bivalent collectivity* to explain why social justice has a socio-economic and a cultural dimension that are intrinsically linked. A bivalent collectivity is a group of people that are exposed to both unjust distribution and cultural and social misrecognition where neither of these injustices are a consequence of the other, but they affect a person or a group both economically as well as culturally and socially. Gender is an example of a bivalent collectivity (Fraser in Robeyns 2003). Fraser therefore, suggests looking at gender "*bifocally*, simultaneously through two different lenses" (Fraser 2007: 25). She argues that both views will show important issues of women's subordinated positions in terms of justice, but neither of them is sufficient alone to capture the whole set of causes and effects. When these two views are joined, the bivalent dimensions of gender's social order appear: "the dimension of maldistribution and the dimension of misrecognition that are fundamental to sexism. (...) To combat the subordination of women requires an approach that combines a politics of redistribution with a politics of recognition" (Fraser 2007: 26).

Likewise, and valid to the gender perspective, does Iris Young think that the reasons why some people benefit and others end up in the short end of distributional inequity, derive from the *lack* of recognition which are demonstrated in different forms from insults, violence, degradation, expropriation, biased law enforcement and poor public policies in which constrains people and their communities. Another of Young's key arguments, is that this lack of recognition is the root of distributive injustice because people, groups, institutions, public and private actors come to naturalize and internalize these practices over time, generating the same attitudes in the larger social and political realms (Robbins 2012; Schlosberg 2004; Young 1990) .

David Schlosberg draws on the thinking of Young and Fraser when he turns to examine how social and environmental movements articulate their claims for justice, and adds: "Here, the call for 'environmental justice' focuses on how the distribution of environmental risks mirrors

the inequity in socio-economic and cultural status” (Schlosberg 2004: 522). Schlosberg thus agrees that distributional inequity and recognition are key elements of justice, but in practice, activists often find themselves excluded by the dominant social, cultural and economic sectors, and therefore they feel discriminated. This misrecognition is experienced both individually and as a society, and he therefore underscores the importance of including the “participation” of affected people to obtain sustainable social and environmental justice (Schlosberg 2009). Also, for Young, the main dynamic to achieve both distributive justice and recognition of difference lies within decision-making structures of politics. She thinks that in order for a rule or decision to be fair, every actor involved should have a voice and be able to agree or reject without oppression. For a social condition to be just Young argues, it should allow everyone to cover all their needs and practice their freedom. In this way, justice itself requires participation which allows people to speak out about their concerns and also to defend democratic processes in which are crucial conditions for social justice (Young 1990). While Young focus on individual participation, Schlosberg addresses the same issue in the context of social movements (2004: 522-523):

“Environmental justice activists call for policy-making procedures that encourage active community participation, institutionalize public participation, recognize community knowledge, and utilize cross-cultural formats at exchanges to enable the participation of as much diversity as exists in a community. Environmental justice groups consistently demand a ‘place at the table’ and the right to ‘speak for ourselves’. The demand for this type of authentic, community-based participation comes out of the experience of disenfranchisement, a result of mis- or malrecognition. To challenge a range of cultural, political, and structural obstacles constructed by cultural degradation, political oppression, and lack of political access, communities are coming to demand a voice and authentic participation”.

In continuation, Schlosberg thinks that a justice movement needs to be unified but at the same time diverse, because amplifying experiences and knowledge about different forms of injustice, the movements will also enhance their capacities of promoting bottom-up approaches in finding solutions to the problems. He believes that movements prove the power in the general hypothesis of Mary Parker Follett, that of: “unity in diversity” and “unity, without uniformity must be our aim” (Schlosberg 2009: 179), because simultaneously they raise a broad range of social and environmental justice issues.



Accordingly, in analysing social and environmental justice, a distribution-centred approach presents many shortcomings. First, it cannot cover the different and wide-ranging claims for justice amongst the diversity of actors and movements. Distribution, which has one economic and a cultural side, cannot be just when managed solely through top-down policies based on systems, processes and rules, but needs to recognize difference amongst people and their wide range of world-views and interests. The lack of recognition or misrecognition is seen by many scholars and activists as both the cause and effect; on one hand, it leads to unequal distribution, exclusion, and impoverished communities, and on the other, it is the long-standing and naturalized inequity and exclusion that makes the conditions for continued mis- or maldistribution (Schlosberg 2009). Certain groups of people, such as women, are often exposed to both economic and cultural misrecognitions, and in order to understand how and why this happens, it is necessary to study these tendencies independently and *bifocally*, from both an economic and a cultural side. The misrecognition in respect of women is the root of sexism, which is a phenomenon that has become internalized and naturalized over time in many societies and in different spheres, and it is also one of main origins for distributive injustices against women. In addition, justice includes a dimension of participation by those who lose out in the politics of distribution and by those who suffer cultural misrecognition. According to Schlosberg: “the construction of inclusive, participatory decision-making institutions is at the centre of environmental justice demands (...). Activists use the claim of environmental injustice to call for policymaking procedures that encourage active community participation, institutionalize public participation, recognize community knowledge and utilize cross-cultural formats and exchanges to enable the participation of diverse, and traditionally excluded communities” (2009: 80). Schlosberg recognizes that it was the social movements that settled and popularized the concept of environmental justice and integrated their claims for justice into a political project at regional, national and global scales (Schlosberg 2009).

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

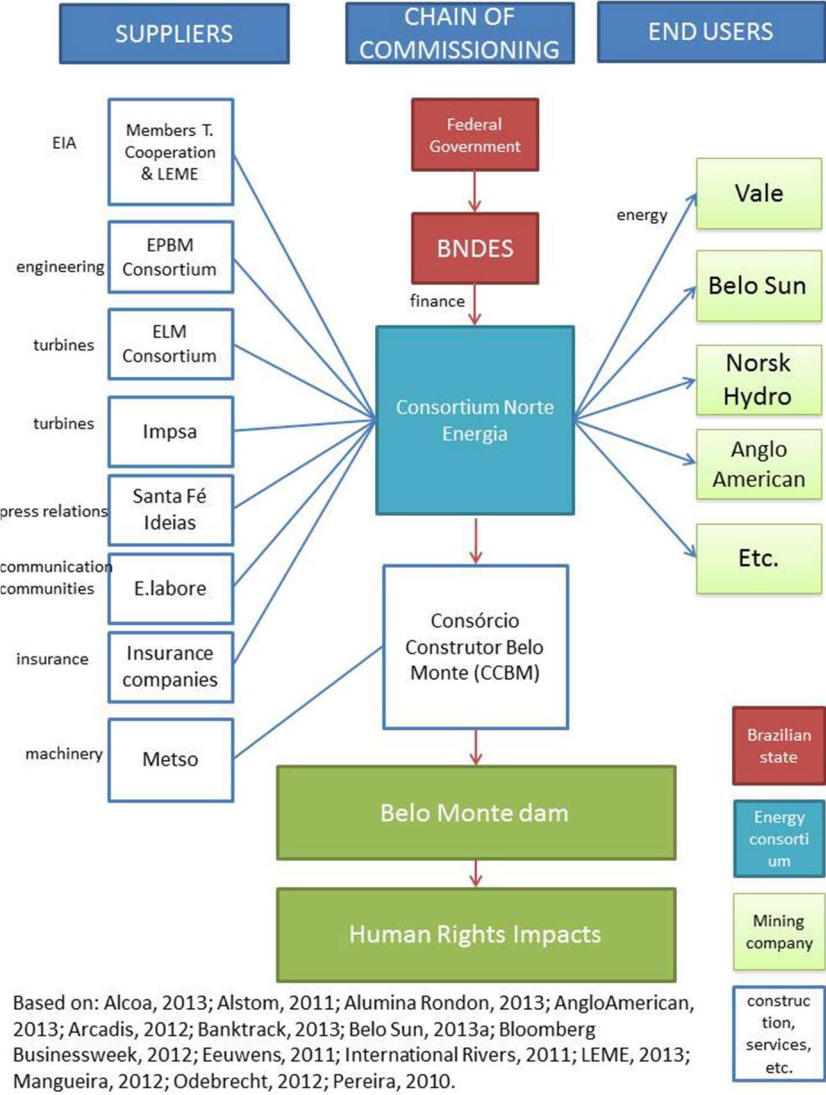
### **4.1. Actors involved, legal controversies of expropriation, consultation and licensing processes**

I begin the results and discussion chapter by defining the main actors involved in the Belo Monte dam complex as several of the interviewees consider them as the drivers of dispossession and maldistribution. Next, I give some clarifications about the legal and institutional controversies in terms the implementation of the mega-dam. The informants often mention these processes and bodies, and it is important to know what they mean to understand the main polemics revolving Belo Monte and what affected people's justice claims are based on. They are also referred to when discussing questions of justice and actions. They include: i) occupied land and forced evictions (expropriation); ii) prior consultations, including the indigenous rights to free, prior and informed consent; iii) project licensing process, which depend on the fulfilments of the Belo Monte dams Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and the Basic Environmental Plan (PBA - Plano Básico Ambiental), which include a series of responsibilities for Norte Energia (the company building the dam) to mitigate negative impacts. Then, I define who the actors involved in the Belo Monte project are. After this, I divide the results in two parts, corresponding to the research questions described above. Part I covers the main social and environmental transformations that women currently are facing in areas affected by the Belo Monte dam, and how they have experienced processes of expropriation, compensation, displacement and increased threats of violence and sexual abuse. Part II covers women's organization, participation and actions at local and national levels within social movements, with a focus on the MAB, to include women and their claims in decision-making arenas of hydro-power projects. These issues are discussed in the framework of gender and three dimensions of social and environmental justice theories.

#### *4.1.1 Actors involved*

Figure 4 provides an indication of the state agencies and corporate actors involved in the Belo Monte dam. The information available on this issue is disperse and unclear, but the Master's

thesis of Joanna Kuijpers<sup>1</sup> (2013) contains information and figures, which help creating an overview of the capital and interest involved in the project, although they may not, according to Kuijpers, be complete.



**Fig.4.** State Agencies and Corporate Actors involved in the Belo Monte dam. (Cited Kuijpers 2013: 40)

<sup>1</sup> The Master thesis of Karin Kuijpers is entitled: Whom to Damn for the Damage of Dams? A normative-empirical analysis of corporate relationships and responsibilities within the Brazilian and Peruvian Minerals-Energy Complex.

Belo Monte Dam is owned by several shareholders that assembled in the Norte Energia S.A, which was granted the construction and operation of the dam in 2010 by the state. The dam complex is known as a national project because the state-owned or state-controlled participation in the consortium constitutes over 80%, and it is mainly funded by the Brazilian Development Bank BNDES. Public electricity suppliers of the Eletrobras group (Eletrobras, Chef and Electronorte) hold 49.98% of the shares of Norte Energia. The pension funds Petros and Funcef both control 10%. Neoenergia controls another 10%. Grupo Amazônia owns another 9.77% and the Brazilian mining company Vale, controls 9% of Norte Energia. Private companies involved are the steel company Sinobras (1%) and Malucelli Energia (0.25%), a private electricity company (Figure 5). Numerous activities are being outsourced to other consortia or enterprises” (Kuijpers 2013; Russau 2013).

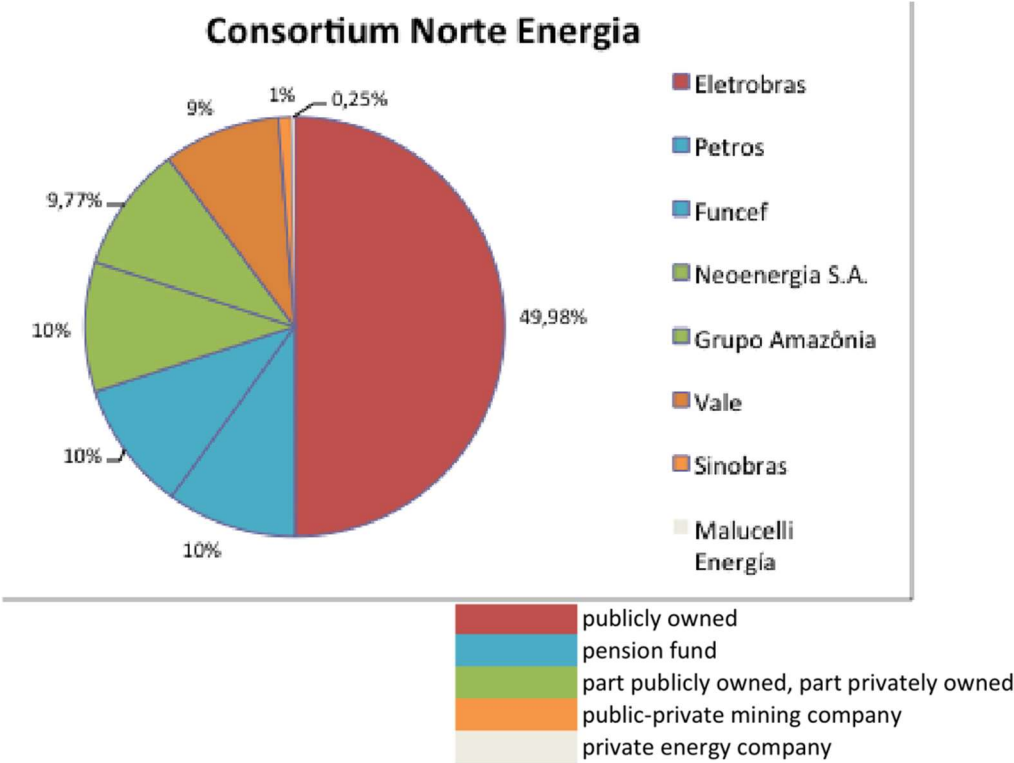


Fig.5. Norte Energia Consortium shareholders (Cited Kuijpers 2013: 40) (NorteEnergia 2016b).

Indirectly, about 10% of the Belo Monte dam are owned by foreign multinational companies and financing bodies because they are stockholders in the state agencies and corporate actors that constitute Norte Energia consortium. The shares in Norte Energia is distributed as

follows: The Brazilian state owns 44,63%; BNDES – Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social owns 11,88%; the US American JPMorgan Chase Bank owns 8,65%; Fonds Skagen K T Verdipapirfond owns 2,03% and 32,81% is free float (Russau 2013).

#### 4.1.2. Occupied land and forced evictions

Forced evictions are defined in Box 1.

**Forced evictions** are the permanent or temporary removal of individuals, families and/or communities against their will from their homes and/or land they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection (Langford & du Plessis 2006).

The World Commission on Dams (WCD 2000) concludes that ‘displacement is being defined both as ‘physical displacement’ as well as ‘displacement of ways of living’. The World Bank further stresses that the lack of land titles cannot be used as a reason to dismiss these groups from compensation and rehabilitation (World Bank 2004).

Forced evictions constitute gross violations of a range of internationally recognized human rights, including the human rights to adequate housing, food, water, health, education, work, security of the person, freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and freedom of movement (UNOHCHR 2013).

**Box 1.** Forced evictions (Cited Kuijpers 2013: 60).

The Belo Monte dam complex will flood more than 516 km<sup>2</sup> of land in addition to the dam’s construction sites, roads and powerlines that also occupy large areas, and thereby affect the people who live and cultivate on this land (Electrobras 2009; Kuijpers 2013). As the public defender who was interviewed for this study explained:

*“The project has to respect the law, and this is not happening. There are more than twenty legal claims linked to land rights, and many more cases have been denounced, where people were deceived to give up their land to give way for the Belo Monte dam.”* (R14MPF)

The problems over land rights in relation to the affected areas of Belo Monte is best

understood by looking at the history of land occupation and lack of titling in the region. About 30% of the land in the Brazilian Amazon is open access where no one has property rights (Kuijpers 2013; Wilkinson et al. 2012). The current problems of land titling derive from the immigration and occupation of these lands that started back in the 1930s. According to a female university professor, the main immigration to the Amazon happened during two main epochs. The first, known as the “rubber tapper period” from the 1930s throughout the 1950s, and the second happened during the 1970’s, the government launched a development project for the region, often referred to as *PIC Altamira I* (Projeto de Integração de Colonização/ Integration Colonization Project). This huge development project was designed to enable the occupation of these lands from Altamira to Itaituba (to the west) and from Altamira to Marabá (to the east). She explained further:

*“Through this project, thousands of families were encouraged by the government to come to the region under the slogan: Homens sem Terras para Terras sem Homens (Landless People to Lands without People). This implied that nobody lived here, as if there were no families here from before. Hence, it was a good solution for landless families that came from the southern parts of the country (due to already intensive and exclusive forms of agribusiness) or for those affected by droughts in the Northeast region. These families settled on plots of land here in this region. This huge development project was designed to encourage the occupation of these lands.”*

(R13PROF)

According to this professor, it was the peasant workers, the riverside dwellers, the quilombolas, the poor people that had brought development to the region in the first place by building the roads and cultivating the land. Most of the people who settled on these plots however, did not secure an official land title when they settled down, and today they face difficulties to prove their ownership over the land they live on and depend on for their subsistence. Most people in the region are poor, which makes it difficult for them to overcome land expropriations, especially for those who do not receive any compensation at all (Kuijpers 2013). A female respondent from the Xingu Forever Alive Movement (*Xingu Vivo Para Sempre - MXVPS*), organization explained that when the companies Electobras (the largest stakeholder within the Norte Energia consortium) and Norte Energia arrived to expropriate land along the Xingu river, they took it without being a state owner and with the whole legal apparatus by their side. This would not have been possible without the support of the State, which consequently went against thousands of poor people’s interest in favor of the

project's benefits. So, when the Brazilian Electricity Regulatory Agency (ANEEL) in 2010 signed the land concession contract with the Norte Energia consortium, they took possession of more than 3,500 hectares of land for the installations of the Belo Monte dam, affecting more than 20,000 people directly. At the same time, Norte Energia was also given power to determine outcomes in compensation conflicts. In the declaration concerning the concession contract, ANEEL affirmed that "indemnification value will be negotiated between the business and the land owners. When there is no agreement, the Declaration of Public Utility (DUP) grants the companies that own the concession the right to expropriate the corresponding land areas based on criteria adopted by the Brazilian Association of Technical Norms (ABNT)." (ANEEL 2011). As a female informant from civil society remarked:

*"They were using the State mechanism to legalize the expropriation, forcing people to give their documents of their land, without explaining their intentions. But in our region this was clear, people saw how the company used the Declaration of Public Utility (DUP), which is a regulation you must accept, when the state requires your land to carry out plans in public interest."* (R22SM)

#### 4.1.3. General hearings

The Brazilian Congress authorized the construction of Belo Monte in July 2005, only awaiting the viability and environmental studies. These were approved "in only 48 hours under a 'super-urgent' regime with no debate and without the constitutionally required consultations with nine of the affected tribes" (Fearnside 2012: 4). No hearings with the local population were organized either due to the urgency in the project approval, although this is a right affected people have as part of the decision-making process according to Brazilian law (Fearnside 2005; Jaichand & Sampaio 2013; Kuijpers 2013). The legal challenge to Belo Monte for the affected population is then based on the claim that they have not been appropriately consulted, something the government denies (Souza Barros 2016). According to Leonardo de Souza Barros, only four public hearings were held at a later stage as part of the Belo Monte's licensing process. These hearings were conducted over six days in September 2009 in the affected municipalities of Brasil Novo, Vitória do Xingu, Altamira and Belém, the capital of Pará state. The main criticism was that the hearings were inadequate because they were held in very few places, many in so small spaces that people could not enter them, and

that the EIA was released to its participants only two days ahead of the meetings, which made it impossible for the interested groups to revise it, suggest changes or oppose to its findings. A large number of national and international organizations as well as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples expressed concerns regarding the failure of the government to address the claims of the natives groups of the Xingu (Souza Barros 2016).

#### *4.1.4 Indigenous Rights to Free, Prior and Informed Consent*

The Belo Monte dam is not located in indigenous territories, and for this reason the indigenous peoples been classified as “indirectly affected” in the EIA (Box 2). Even if the reservoirs do not flood their lands, the dam blocks the water of the Xingu and severely reduces its flow for the stretch of the river that runs over their land downstream the dam (Jaichand & Sampaio 2013; Kuijpers 2013). According to the Federal Constitution (in §30 of article 231), the use of water resources in indigenous territories can only be accomplished with the authorization of the congress after consulting the affected communities (Zugman 2013). However, as the indigenous communities were not considered directly affected in the EIA, Norte Energia have used this as an argument for not consulting the indigenous peoples. Still, several national and international NGOs filed the case in front of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights requesting precautionary measures based on national and international legal instruments that could protect marginalized and vulnerable groups living along the Xingu River. As expressed by Jaichand & Sampaio (2013: 412): “In justifying their decision for precautionary measures against Brazil, the Inter-American Commission explained that it considered that the state had not fulfilled the following obligations: to carry out *free, prior, and informed consultations* (FPIC) with the affected indigenous peoples in accordance with the jurisprudence of the Inter-American system; to adopt substantial measures that would guarantee the personal integrity of indigenous peoples and their collective existence as such” .

Also, the International Labor Organization (ILO) concluded in their report that the Brazilian government directly violated the rights of indigenous communities in the Xingu Basin because the dam changes the navigability of the River and permanently alter the biodiversity and climate of the region. According to ILO, these impacts "go beyond the flooding of land or displacement of these people" (ILO cited in Paz & Miño 2012: 1). “The findings of the ILO confirm the position of Brazil's Federal Public Ministry (MPF) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States, two institutions that



have condemned the Brazilian government for failure to hold indigenous hearings and have demanded the project's suspension” (Paz & Miño 2012: 1).

An ***Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)*** for a large dam such as the Belo Monte complex, maps and evaluates the ecological, social and economic effects when a new, artificial environment replaces a natural, cultural and traditional system. In short, the EIA should outline the causes and consequences of environmental, social and economic alterations, and value them as equally important. Effects on the local population along the basin, biodiversity impacts, migration patterns (from rural to urban areas and vice versa), attraction of thousands of lay workers, changes or pressure on public services and water and sanitary system, deforestation, road construction and agricultural changes are other components in which have to be considered in the EIA from a quantitative and qualitative points of view. The risk of disease transmissions (waterborne, vector borne or “social diseases”) should also be included in the analysis of the EIA of the project. Climatic changes on local and regional scales, ought to be considered in the study as well. The aim of an EIA of a large dam project is to promote a true development perspective and vision of a restoration economy and to be ahead of any environmental or social problems to be able to avoid or mitigate them before they occur. (Jorgensen et al. 2012; Tundisi et al. 2015) .

***The Basic Environmental Plan (PBA)*** designed by Norte Energia for the Belo Monte project consists of 14 plans, 54 programs and 86 projects that should meet the conditions of the Installation License, issued by IBAMA (Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources). The document has seven volumes that describe the objectives and characteristics of these plans, programs and projects, including the integrated management plan for the Volta Grande do Xingu. The PBA is an instrument for the planning and implementation of public policies and it has been adjusted during Belo Monte’s implementation process, as agreed with IBAMA. It is criticized by affected people and NGO’s for being conditioned by Norte Energia’s interests of saving socio-environmental costs as it is developed by them, with their own criteria, and is not sufficiently responding to affected people’s interests, as many important development issues are left out, such as kindergardens, higher education and the implementation of water and sanitation. The PBA is also disputed because it doesn’t fulfil the development goals (Amazônia 2012).

Box 2. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the Basic Environmental Plan (PBA).

#### 4.1.5. Licensing process

Environmental licensing in Brazil includes the provision of three types of licenses: *preliminary license*, *installation license*, and *operating license*. The *preliminary license*, confirms the environmental feasibility of the project and approves the location of the dam and its initiation. This license requires the fulfillment of a series of conditions, specified in the EIA that is developed and submitted by the construction company (Norte Energia). These conditions that involve the mitigation of environmental impacts, have to be met within a set time period. (NorteEnergia 2016a). When the EIA is approved, an *installation license* is granted that authorizes the start of construction according to the conditions established in the EIA report, including environmental control measures. Finally, and when the construction is approved, an *operating license* is granted (Fainguerlernt 2016; IBAMA 2016; McCormick 2007). The only period that the affected people and the public are allowed to participate in the licensing process is *prior* to the first stage of the licensing process when public hearings are arranged. (McCormick 2007).

The Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA) manages and controls the licensing stages. IBAMA was established by the government in order to “centralize the execution of environmental regulations and policies.” (Drummond & Barros-Plataiu 2006: 95). It is subordinated the Ministry of Environment (MMA) and it is the main executive environmental agency in Brazil. The main responsibilities of IBAMA is to control and protect water resources (IBAMA 2016): “It regulates the environmental impact assessment process. It verifies that the construction of hydroelectric dams in conjunction with other water needs” (McCormick 2007: 238), but in the licensing process of the Belo Monte dam, IBAMA has been involved in several controversies by sidestepping Brazilian law.

A series of political and legal controversies occurred during the licensing process of the Belo Monte dam. One of the first, happened in February 2010 when IBAMA acted under intense political pressure, saw its own president resign and subsequently approved the dam’s preliminary license in contradiction to the technical evaluations of its own staff. Under these conditions, IBAMA allowed the project's auction to proceed. Two months later, Norte Energia consortium was granted the construction and exploitation of the project (Hall & Branford 2012). The conditions in which the preliminary license was given however, were so

fragile that IBAMA established 40 environmental conditions (several of them complex) relative to the affected populations, water quality, fauna, basic sanitation, recovery of already degraded areas, among others, which had to be resolved before granting the installation license (Fainguerlernt 2016). Between 2010 and 2011, both the government and Norte Energia overlooked the obligation to comply with the 40 conditions, and in January 2011 in an illegal maneuver, IBAMA granted a “partial installation license” and the work started to clear access roads and to set up the construction site. Such “partial installation license” doesn’t exist in Brazilian legislation, and is seen by experts and civil society as a way to bypass official licensing procedures (Fearnside 2012; Hall & Branford 2012). This license was a clear threat to the local people because it showed the government's choice to continue advancing the project without obeying Brazilian law. This also reduced the probability of fulfilling the 40 conditions that IBAMA had established, which put the company’s obligations to the uprooted and affected communities at risk (AIDA 2012). “A month later, the Federal Public Prosecutor filed a lawsuit against Belo Monte and a judge blocked the project on the grounds that all preconditions had not been satisfied. Continuing the ding-dong battle, on 3 March 2011 a regional federal judge overturned this decision, allowing preparatory work to start immediately” (Hall & Branford 2012: 5). Later, in June 2011, IBAMA issued the installation license, and at the same time they approved a series of responsibilities and actions, designed by Norte Energia, that formed the *Basic Environmental Plan* (PBA) (Fainguerlernt 2016) (Box 2). At the end of 2014, Belo Monte had completed about 70% of the construction work, and in the summer of 2015, close to completion, the company had not yet obtained the operation license. In the beginning of 2015, Norte Energia was met with a resistance campaign organized by the *Movimento Xingu Vivo Para Sempre* that mobilized society to sign a petition that demanded IBAMA not to issue the final license, because at that time (and currently), there are 500 families who have been left without indemnifications and continue to live in flooded areas of Altamira city in miserable conditions (MAB 2016a). Another issue was that the sanitation project for Altamira had not been completed and the city’s sewage continued to being dumped into the Xingu river. Despite the above controversies that were key and many others in respect of the EIA, IBAMA granted Norte Energia the operation license in November 2015, and the flooding of the dam was authorized (Fainguerlernt 2016).

## PART I

*“We need to pay close attention to the spaces of everyday life to keep women visible in rapidly changing world conditions, where their activities tend to slip into the shadows of dominant models in the literature” (Dyck 2005: 234)*

### 4.2. Women, expropriation and alienation from natural resources

A majority of the respondents talked about the conflicting interest between national and local development needs, and they did not agree that the true objectives of the great Belo Monte dam is to create growth and improve living conditions for Brazil’s citizens. Their general view was that it violates people’s rights more than any other developing project in the country. Uprooting and unsettling between 40.000 people from their homes, land and communities without adequate rehabilitation plans, public policies and insufficient compensations are some of the reasons of the rights abuses. An affected peasant women expressed:

*Belo Monte derives from a development model that... I would say modifies totally the place. It is a violence without comparison in the Amazonian region, because it is so absurd the destruction of the environment, and environment that us who live here preserve. A project like this arrives and takes everything, it deforests, floods and destroys, and people remain alone. (R4AP)*

A male leader of a social movement said:

*“In Brazil we cannot speak of these great works of investment and growth are for national development. The Brazilian Amazon is the region that has most resources available and is therefore under constant pressure from strong capital. The demand for energy have initiated the planning of more than 30 large dams over the next 30 years in the Amazon, and all these dams are intended to serve the interest of international capital. No development plan is designed for the Brazilian Amazon or the people there.” (R19SM)*

A male landless farmer from Brazil Novo augmented:

*“Belo Monte was an imposed project to benefit the big transnationals that always expand and dominate both the mining activities and the big dams to produce energy. The control of the capital meant stepping over the people without respecting their identity, their culture, their origin or their traditions.” (R7AP)*

The informants above express strong critique of Brazil’s development model saying that the true objective of the Belo Monte project is not to create development for people, which is evident when looking at the sectors and investors that profit, in contrast with its stark human, social and environmental consequences. These consequences have implications for a large number of people and communities, those excluded from the benefits of the dam, who see their environment and life-supporting resources being damaged or degraded. According to Rutgerd Boelens (2015), most international policy models and national environmental laws are not adapted local realities, and much less the every-day lives of women in Latin America, and just like the Belo Monte case, it is the local population that need to adapt, not the project or plans. Boelens depicts expert blindness in an allegory he calls “Tower of Indifference”, where the experts and decision-makers look at the world from a tower high above ground, at such a distance that the people below and their realities seem equal, and they are not able to distinguish the complexities of the environment and social organization in the world below, and much less the gendered nature of these linkages (Boelens 2015). He claims that a separated, centralised, water science-policy nexus create distanced, but powerful views and models, “detached from reality, that deny real-life people and nature, transforming them from subjects into object; objects that experience no suffering” (Boelens 2015: 7). Latin America’s diverse river and water societies are thereby constantly neglected and overlooked, to the extent that it has developed into a longstanding practice in which Boelens calls “*the dark legend of UnGovernance*”. This dark discourse claims that peripheral water territories, such as the Brazilian Amazon, seen from a neoliberal economic perspective, are chaotic places because of the disorganization, irrational values, unproductive systems, inefficient resource use and constant water conflicts, that makes these places un-ruled and even unruly (Boelens 2015). This “UnGov Legend”, disfigures Latin America’s water societies by overlooking water users, meanings, values, identities, and rights systems on the ground. It then constructs its own water users, which identities that conveniently fit the models, with needs and rationales matching the imaginations of those in power, shored up in their science, technology and policy towers” (Boelens 2015: 8).

In this way, destructive large-scale infrastructures such as the Belo Monte dam are justified, ignoring that it pushes local communities and societies into an environmental, social, economic and cultural crisis. One of the major intrusions that the “UnGov Legend”, conceals is the expropriation of homes, land and livelihoods of thousands of people, which is required for the installation of the dam. Several of the respondents from social movements, the Pará university and a female public prosecutor were blaming the state for letting this happen, and they explained how the state had given away public and private resources to a private company instead of carrying out its duty by acting in the interest of the traditional peoples of the region. A female informant from a social movement claimed:

*“They (Norte Energia) were using the State mechanism to legalize the expropriation, forcing people to give them their documents of their land, without explaining their intentions. But in our region this was clear, people saw how the company used the Declaration of Public Utility (DUP), which is a regulation you must accept, when the State requires your land to carry out plans in public interest.” (R22SM)*

Two female respondents from the university and a civil organization explained that most of the peasants and riverside dwellers who immigrated to lands in the municipalities of Altamira, Brazil Novo and Vitória do Xingu in the 1970’s and onwards, held a paper of property for their land, but not a deed issued by the *Institute for Agricultural Reform* (INCRA), which is the institution that legalizes the land in the State of Pará:

*“These people were the ones treated with the greatest injustice because they subsisted as sharecroppers on land that mainly belonged to the region, but also the state and the municipality, and therefore they were not entitled to compensations.” (R22SM)*

A riverside women told how she had experienced the expropriation process:

*“I am a riverside dweller and I lived on my island for ten years: I work and make my own living, cultivating the land and fishing. I have six daughters and grandchildren and they all used to live with me. I was born and grew up this way, in this kind of world, as a riverside person. I hoped that when the dam was built, life would improve, but things got worse, for everybody who’s in this struggle, and we are many. They said we didn’t have a document for our land, so what they offered was 9,341 BRL or a house in a resettlement area as a compensation for both our properties. Others that do not have a document for their land have not been compensated at all... I have some*

*relatives in the lower areas of the river (Volta Grande) ... none of them received a house, and they are still there, risking their lives in that place. A cousin of mine with two of my nieces... none of them were given homes and they don't have anywhere to go... they were told that they will not be given a house... Two of my daughters still live with me and two persons that weren't compensated and would be living on the street if they didn't come to stay with me... Things are difficult, very difficult.” (R2AP)*

Regarding the expropriation and forced evictions, many of the interviewees, especially women from Altamira or the riverside villages said that the loss of land and the submergence of commons were the worst impacts of the Belo Monte dam. Many people without any political or economic power, the most vulnerable and marginalized, had lost their homes and land without being informed or consulted in advance or sufficiently compensated. Many of the interviewees who had been displaced, and also a female public prosecutor, called attention to the devastating effects of Belo Monte's expropriation process that had ruined local people's livelihoods and stable economic activities.

Returning to Boelens's "UnGov Legend", hydropower developers such as Norte Energia and the Brazilian government do not want to see or understand, due to their distant positioning, how crucial the Xingu River is for local people's lives, like Smitu Kothari expresses it: "... it is not only people who are displaced, but also cultures, languages, complex knowledge systems, and symbolic and cosmological universe. This development apathy and its reductionist, arrogant sensibility is powerfully manifest when development planners and practitioners argue that cash compensation is an adequate way of assuaging the brutal disruption of people from place" (Kothari et al. 2005: 124). They do not see each person's drama, loss and misery when all those values are lost. The actual situation contrast the ideas of liberal theorists and social movements that emphasise the importance of 'fair procedures' based on ethical principles, to guarantee just resource distribution (Rawls 1971; Zwarteveen & Boelens 2014). Yet, as seen in the Belo Monte conflict, what is fair for the dominant classes, is not at all perceived as just for other groups of people who live and think differently than the ones in power. In Rawls' prominent *A Theory of Justice* (1971), he uses the metaphor of a "veil of ignorance" to illustrate how people in power, take decisions based on their perceptions of justice (or justified decisions), without seeing the consequences they may have on others, because they fail to recognize that people are not equal, but have completely different criteria for survival due to their traditions, culture and livelihoods (Rawls 1971; Zwarteveen & Boelens 2014).

Expropriation is then justified by the uniform world-views and set of principles of the dominant sectors of society where it is acceptable that a major group of people's access to infinite resources, safety and sustainable livelihood is reduced down to an economic value (Zwarteveen & Boelens 2014). The evicted people who have the right to compensations or housing, are thus expected to join progress and development on their arrival to resettlement areas. In the cases they don't, they have to abandon their land and solve the problems of uprooting themselves. In this way, diverse water cultures are demolished by taking over local land and water resources while installing 'rational order' amongst the evicted people, forcing them into uniform, urban societies that many cannot adapt to (Boelens 2015). Expropriation is one of the most conflictive and agonising issues of the Belo Monte project. A riverside woman told how she lived before displacement and her efforts to make a home and living for herself:

*“When I went to the forest, I put up a hammock in the trees with a plastic cover over it and started to work, clearing the ground and planting, I made my own plantation. I just paid someone to cut the trees, everything else I did myself. And now... having to leave all that with empty hands... these people come from I don't know where to perturb our lives. This is a serious situation.” (R2AP)*

One of the displaced women addressed some of the consequences for riverside peoples:

*“I am a fisherwoman and I lived on a piece of land by the river. Because of the way I used to live, the Xingu was my bank account, credit card, my supermarket, my pharmacy. From what we produced, I could earn money to buy me clothes and shoes. This is what the river meant to me. Today, in the place I live now, I feel lost because my whole life was linked to the Xingu. Our land and river provided everything we needed. On our plot I grew acai, pineapple, hog plum, banana and different types of vegetables. This is what the soil provided us. Now all this is lost.” (R10AP)*

She also said that the environmental and cultural change, from island livelihood to resettlement, was difficult to overcome for most people because economic indemnifications were insufficient for people to enable them to buy land upstream the reservoir and recover the life they had, and the resettlements were all located inland, distant from the river. Viewing this in the light of the environmental justice theories, Nancy Fraser (1995) and David Schlosberg (2009) distinguish between two broadly considered understandings of injustice.



The first, refers to distribution, demanding a fairer allocation of goods and resources among stakeholders. Distribution concerns socioeconomic injustice that is rooted in the political-economic organisation of society. The Belo Monte dam generated unjust distribution of economic and material goods, in terms of expropriation of land and by depriving people access to the recourses that were life-supporting for them, without providing solutions or adequate compensations so that the affected people could re-establish somewhere else. Many of the women who participated in this study explained that they had ended up much worse than before the dam as they had been denied a satisfactory standard of living. (Fraser 1995; Schlosberg 2009). The second type of injustice, is linked to the lack of recognition of difference, is cultural or symbolic and is “rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication” (Fraser 1995: 71). Cultural injustices may include cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect for other groups of people and societies, that are forms of oppression that are the underlying causes of poor distribution in the first place (Fraser 1995; Schlosberg 2004; Zwartveen & Boelens 2014). According to David Schlosberg (2009), it is important to understand the processes that cause maldistribution. It is not sufficient to focus on idealistic notions of “what should be” but also by assuming that poor distribution is produced by dominating, oppressive mind-sets that power decision-making and fails to recognize other values and world-views. (Lamont & Favor 1996; Young 1990; Zwartveen & Boelens 2014). In the case of Belo Monte, from an affected person’s point of view, the latter seems to be the dominant procedure on behalf of the company and with the State’s consent. In this respect, the displaced women who spoke above, also talked about her new situation, being resettled far away from the river, about her losses, all of them linked to intrinsic values:

*“The absence of the river for fisher folks is very big, because the river provides us everything we need. For us the river doesn’t have a price, it is above any monetary value, so if they asked us to put any price on the river and the place we used to live, I cannot give you any, we didn’t want to sell, nothing can pay for what we had. Now, living away from the river is very difficult. We don’t know how to live in another way; what we had was perfect, now everything is a misery.” (R10AP)*

Fair compensations, from an economic point of view, would be a match between the maximum amount of what the expropriator is willing to pay for a property and the minimum of what the owner is willing to accept for losing the land (Knetsch & Sinden 1984). Yet, for many people like the displaced riverside woman quoted above, certain assets are

irreplaceable, such as infinite resources (forest, water, river biodiversity and land) that are life-supporting and sustain smallholder economies. People's every-day lives, identity, culture, traditions and family-organization are also linked to these environmental assets, and any type of compensation will be perceived as unjust and unacceptable, except perhaps, being offered enough money to buy a similar piece of land by the river. The reparations offered by Norte Energia then, cannot compensate these values but instead impose the affected people a life without them. Amartya Sen has conceptualised such socioeconomic processes, and believes that justice requires ensuring individual liberties and that people have "equal capabilities to function" (Sen cited in Fraser 1995: 25). If the evaluation of distributive justice requires looking at the real opportunities of individuals to assure their interests, then attention should not focus on their income or goods nor their desires, but rather on the disadvantages and problems they have to overcome to live in dignity. In this way distribution is more likely to be just, also in relation to expropriation processes (Sen 1992; Sen 2011) .

Most women felt Norte Energia's land expropriation process particularly hard because they stay home on a daily basis, taking care of the children and household, and they were the first to face the notifications, warnings and threats to leave their properties. Several of the affected women, and some female informants from the social movements perceived the process of expropriation as very cruel, where laws had been misused to trample over the rights of people. This occurs because the company that has the whole apparatus of laws, expertise and economic resources to govern and control, and the affected people, many illiterate, don't have any possibility to be heard, at least not on fair and correct terms. One of the affected women spoke about her meeting with Norte Energia where she had confronted them, referring to the law, in an effort to keep her property:

*"I arrived there and I had read the laws, articles of the law and the points of objection and they said: no, no, this is not valid here, expropriation does not work like this and that I shouldn't engage in the matters stated there. We try to be strong to fight, but we realize that we are vulnerable in front of the company, that there is nothing we can do, and even you try to be tough and not cry in front of them, the world collapses when you arrive home."* (R3AP)

According to Zwarteveen & Boelens, most legal institutions proclaim uniform values of justice, uniform property framework and uniform identities, based on equality of all citizens before the law. The situation of people who settled on unoccupied lands in the past and their

different reasons (many of them illiterate) for not holding a deed of their property, is therefore not looked at, in spite the difficulties people had in the past obtaining a deed. Environmental laws and policies then emphasise unity and homogeneity (with exception of laws and international conventions that protect indigenous peoples), where the state has the right to design, implement and adjust environmental laws and resolve conflicts, suppressing all other tribunals or rights framework (Zwarteveen & Boelens 2014). Non state actors such as Norte Energia ignores social difference such as those based on class, ethnicity and gender, and therefore, the state should have taken action if marginalized groups were to achieve justice (Nussbaum 2003).

A displaced riverside woman reported how Norte Energia not only ignores social difference in expropriation processes, but even takes advantage of them. She had experienced that when she was out for the day, the company had made her disabled husband sign the agreement for expropriation.

*“When they came to my island to negotiate, I was out fishing, and they made my husband sign the papers putting everything in his name, the small house in the city and the houses there. They registered my daughter as our dependent and didn’t consider that she had her own house... My husband is not normal after having his strokes. A person who suffers from that is no longer normal. He is like a child and they took advantage of us. When I went to the notary’s office, there was nothing I could do... Everything had been signed already. It’s very difficult. All I am asking is that justice be done and they consider us to be human beings.” (R2AP)*

One of the leaders of a socio-environmental organization expressed that the Norte Energia consortium didn’t provide correct information to the population about the expropriation and compensation plans:

*“They conceal, they omit, they lie and all with the consent of the Brazilian government, which is totally responsible for the intrusion of human, social, environmental and cultural rights.” (R23SM)*

Another interviewee from a woman’s organization said:

*“Many people are being manipulated, they (Norte Energia) say it is not true, but with our conscience, with our day-to-day history, we know that people was not*

*compensated, many people didn't receive a house... people here live in a war in terms of information.” (R21SM)*

One of the women from a civil society organization recapped the concerns of the majority of the respondents:

*“Women today, here in the Xingu, are women whose rights have been violated, our living conditions have been violated. This is because women have been evicted from their houses beside the river, seeing their families getting dispersed; they had to leave the rural areas they produced; they had to leave their houses in the neighbourhoods of Altamira, all for the great Belo Monte reservoir. We are being expelled from our land, from our houses, from our livelihoods, our way of life. This project is putting an end to those living conditions that we had. We had to start everything from scratch. We've left everything, our crops, our gardens and our way of life. Everything is destroyed by the companies and of Belo Monte. So it is total destruction of our lives.” (R23SM)*



Fig. 6. Riverside community by the Xingu River located in the flood-area of the reservoir (2013).

### 4.3. Women and compensations

A majority of the respondents who had been displaced or compensated said there were few or practically no possibility to negotiate the size and types of returns that were materialized in cash pay-outs, credit letters or a house in resettlement areas in the edges of Altamira city. As a female respondent stated:

*“The compensations are proposed by the company. This initial step is already wrong because companies will always have opposed interests from those affected. The company is interested in minimizing the socio-environmental cost. The interest of the affected is to safeguard their rights. These are conflicting interests.”* (R18SM)

Often with no property rights, in a patriarchal system, it is difficult for women to access compensation or be resettled in a similar way to the way they used to live. A displaced woman, who had been compensated, confirmed this and explained that they were left without options to choose between the resettlements:

*“I didn’t go to the resettlement because they only gave me Laranjeiras<sup>2</sup> as an option, and it is very noisy there, close to the airport. For me it is inconvenient because it is difficult to come back at night from work, and it is far from my children’s school so I choose a compensation to buy a house in a different place.”* (R3AP)

When the Brazilian Electricity Regulatory Agency (ANEEL) signed the land concession contract with the Norte Energia consortium in 2010, they were also authorized to estimate and settle the compensation, although the company itself would be one of the interested parties. In situation of conflicts, where an agreement could not be reached, (as explained with further detail on p. 32 and 33), the Declaration of Public Utility (DUP) had given Norte Energia, the right to determine the value of the compensations based on criteria adopted by the Brazilian Association of Technical Norms (ABNT) (ANEEL 2011). With this right, Norte Energia had the full control over the recompenses, and the affected people had nothing to say when the payments or housing were unreasonable low and unjust. Regarding the estimation of the indemnifications, an activist explained how Norte Energia had created a system, which they

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<sup>2</sup> Referring to Fig. 2, (p. 11), the affected woman lived in the area marked in green (flood-area) in the map over Altamira which is next to the city center. Laranjeiras is located inland on the very opposite of the city center, near the airport.

called “the book of prices for compensations.” In this “book”, people could find the value of their house. Norte Energia had classified wooden houses in six different types and brick houses in another six categories. They also distinguished type and quality of materials the houses were made of, and classified everything into their system. As a result, according to a priest from a social movement:

*“They discount the value of the houses. Their system isn’t real and fair and it’s a way for them to reduce the recompenses to the people that have to leave their homes.”*

(R28SM/Priest)

The resettled respondents, all female, affirmed that their properties had been estimated below their value: One of the women said:

*“The value of the houses is imposed, there is no possibilities to negotiate, they are valued very low.”* (R5AP)

Another displaced woman added:

*“Our negotiation was unfair. In economic terms it was cruel because they said that everything you have in your life has no value and it is impossible to discuss what they say, they manipulate everything.”* (R3AP)

Further, Norte Energia doesn’t recognize, in terms of indemnifications, that many rural people and fishing families have two homes: one in the city where they stay when they sell their harvest and seek services such as medical care. These people are either offered compensation for their urban or their rural home and to diminish compensations. Further, it is also very common in riverside and rural communities that many generations of a family build their houses on the same land. This kind of family organization is not allowed when it comes to indemnifications. A fisherwomen shared her experience:

*“The value they offered of nine thousand... I would be ashamed to offer that amount to someone like me who has such a big family. They said we had another house, but everybody who makes their living in the countryside has a little house in the city for when they come here to buy things. One house has nothing to do with the other! They did not respect our place of dwelling, and they came offering 9,341 BRL. But this money isn’t enough to buy a plot of land. We lived there, all three families, my*

*husband and I and two of my daughters with their families, but they didn't take that into account. They didn't give my daughters a house or a piece of land.” (R2AP)*

Another woman had also been compensated for only one of their properties. She said:

*“They offered to pay 34,000 BRL for the house on the island. The one in the city they didn't pay for, nor the oven, or the tables and chairs... the barn, our three outbuildings and four boats... none of that they paid for. Either I accepted the money or I would be left with nothing. And I became afraid of losing everything. So I signed. They deceived me and underpaid me. The house on the island was spacious, 300 square meters with a living-room in the front and one in the back, three bedrooms, a big kitchen and two bathrooms. The money they gave didn't compensate for what we had... For the money we constructed a small house, 10x8 meters, without a living room. It is located in a village 8 kilometres away from the river.” (R10AP)*

An indigenous woman who lived on an island inundated by the Belo Monte reservoir and whose house in Altamira was also located in an affected area expressed:

*“The 28,000 BRL they offered us for everything, is too little for all of us. On the island we were seven families all together, including my parents, my three children and two married sisters... The company only allowed me to register my immediate family for compensation, but we want to be relocated all together by the Xingu. The river now has two sides, the one that flood and the other that dry out. We want to be resettled above the reservoir on land big enough to grow our crops. I want them to pay back everything they have destroyed. Everything.” (R6AP)*

About her house in the city she continued:

*“We had a meeting with IBAMA in Brasilia, and they said this part of the city had to be demolished, and the National Water Agency (ANA), also said this area had to be torn down. But for me, this house is everything I have now for my children and they need it very much because it makes it possible for them to study, to maintain a dignified life, so they can support us and help strengthening the struggle too by studying.” (R6AP)*

As outlined above, Norte Energia has placed evicted people under state and market control. The state had passed the responsibility to negotiate the type and size of compensations to the

expropriators, which left the affected people without a say in this process because in a situation of conflict it was the company that, according to the concession contract, had the final word (ANEEL 2011). Although the company supposedly follows the “equality for all” principle, it doesn’t work this way in practice, because a majority of the people who live in the Amazon region, are not at all equal to the powerful, distant, decision-makers but hold a completely different set of values and aspirations deriving from class, education, ethnicity, culture and gender. In front of people with properties in the reservoir’s flood-areas, the company proclaimed using uniform values of justice and property-rights framework, where all rules and regulations are applied equally to all. Norte Energia thus, was enjoying the control over compensations, rule-making and conflict resolving, overpowering all other legal frameworks (Boelens 2009; 2015; Zwarteveen & Boelens 2014). Exploring the concept of justice in the expropriation and compensation processes of the Belo Monte project, one can see that the problems arise, like Nancy Fraser (2001) suggests, from two main ways of thinking and acting, namely *misrecognition* and *maldistribution*. Like explained before, *distributive perspective* is rooted in the economic structure in society, and injustice arise from class-like inequalities, and can go as far as exploitation, deprivation and marginalization (maldistribution), like the informants of this study told about. The *recognition perspective* concern respect for different people, cultures, identities and values. Injustice as misrecognition derives from “institutionalised hierarchies of cultural value” (Fraser 2001: 5) and results in cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect. Some people are more exposed to injustices originating from poor distribution and misrecognition such as women from the Amazon region because of traditional gender role-valuation. According to some of the female respondents, some women have been affected by this type of discrimination in the compensation processes. A displaced women elaborated on this:

*“When compensation isn’t good enough, it affects more women that need a place to live with the kids. If the reparations don’t give you a house or other benefits, you are in a difficult situation. Women always put their children and the family first, and now you always have somebody that is worried because she will not be able to buy a place for her children to be safe.” (R3AP)*

Answering about compensations paid to women, several of the female respondents talked about the discrimination against women that always existed in Brazil. One respondent said:

*“Women here have always been discriminated because of their place in society and*



*within the family where they do the greatest share of household activities.” (R24SM)*

They explained that women were clearly worse off in terms of compensation for their businesses because the kind of work many women do, are not recognized as a proper profession. A female respondent told what had happened to her:

*“I work with manicure and I had my own salon in Altamira but Norte Energia didn't pay any recompense for it when I had to close it down. They do not recognize manicure as a profession; to be a freelancer is not considered a profession, so there were a lot of women like me, who lost their income when they lost their manicure or hairdressing salon.” (R5AP)*

The lack of recognition for women's work and sources of income on behalf of Norte Energia have effects then on the compensations paid to women. According to Fraser (2007), gender related injustices can also be linked to the two-dimensional conception of justice because in the view of distribution, gender appears as a class-like discrimination, rooted in the economic structure of society such as paid “productive” and unpaid “reproductive” as well as household and care-taking labour. From the recognition perspective, women have a different status than men in many societies, and these depend on cultural patterns on how women are regarded in different contexts. As Fraser puts it: “a major feature of gender injustice is androcentric: an institutionalized pattern of cultural value that privileges traits associated with masculinity, while devaluing everything coded as "feminine" (Fraser 2007: 4). Compensations also interfere in family relations and sometimes make women's situation within the family more exposed, creating conflicts about how the money should be spent or shared. A male informant from the university observed how this had led to the break-up of couples:

*“In a family, as the father was compensated, the mother disagreed on how the resources would be spent, and they ended up getting divorced due to this dynamic which is linked to big project indemnifications and leads to ruptures of families, which affects also children and adolescents.” (R12PROF)*

There are different kinds of family problems deriving from expropriation and compensation, which vary depending on what kind of support they receive, how people adapt to it and carry on with their lives. According to a female respondent from the social movements, the conditionals of the Basic Environmental Plan (PBA) suggest that people's living conditions

should improve after the indemnifications, but for some families, they can be a source of struggle:

*“The company provide the money, credit letter or resettle families but they have no responsibility to monitor and do a follow-up.” (R21SM)*

A female respondent from the social movements explained that neither the state nor the company had recognized the impacts on the population because very little had been done to mitigate or implement public policies for minimizing the impacts. The absence of actions, was, according to her the same as not acknowledging the problems. A displaced woman had similar views, and added information on how the company dealt with the affected people:

*“We are just a collateral effect of big construction and development plans. This is what I see here, that the population of Altamira is just a big collateral effect, a big stone for the construction of Belo Monte. And we arrived to a point in which the company found that they would be able to adjust this collateral effect, in their own ways, but the company was not able to adjust, but to damage the life of people living here. They changed the lives of people that were already difficult, to make them worse.” (R3AP)*

Norte Energia and the State in which had agreed to its illegal implementation process, did not take seriously enough the human distress, which is manifested when looking at the social development sides of the project, where problems related to expropriation, compensations and resettlement have been badly planned, insufficient and poorly conducted. Although many people have been benefitted through employment at the dam or receiving better housing than they had before, the consequences according to all the respondents, have been severe and distressing, and not in accordance to the affected people’s needs and well-being. Through their position and distanced vision from the “Tower of Indifference”, the decision-makers, converts both humans and the environment into objects, imposing them identities as poor urban workers or poor suburb people that would be better off than before, in a modernised environment and way of life, formed by their own ideas of what other people should be (Boelens 2015). As such they provide top-down solutions for the uprooted people with the idea that their compensation and resettlement plans would be adequate for them, without taking seriously the human relationships, intrinsic values linked to the river, territory, cultures and gender groups and the effect the loss of these have on people and women in particular.

Often, injustices and their solutions are integrally connected (Schlosberg 2009), and the findings below show how these affect women.

#### **4.4. Women and displacement**

Many of the complications related to resettlement and social services, were, according to two public prosecutors and a university professor, aggravated by the massive immigration of people who had come to work on the dam. The organization of compensations and resettlement started after the arrival of the workers. A female informant from the public ministry commented:

*“All these people who came from far away to work on the construction settled in the urban centre of Altamira. It was too much, as Altamira was not prepared to receive all these people, it is an extremely vulnerable society that already is burdened with a lot of problems like drugs, violence that have augmented in the last years. Also, the prices went up, today it is perhaps a bit better, but it is very expensive to live here.”*

(R14MPF)

Most of the respondents, said that the displacement and resettlement had caused a decline in their own and other people's living conditions in terms of housing, livelihood, costs increase, public services and safety.

##### *4.4.1. Breach of community bond, housing and social services*

Several of the evicted women pointed out that the upheaval of their communities was very difficult for them, because they depended much on the daily support and contact with friends and family members that had resettled somewhere else. Several women explained how the company had failed to take account of people's relations within communities and households:

*“Many people that were close to me, live far away now, my relatives, my friends, the neighbours of an entire life... there are people that I don't even know where they went, I haven't been able to find out which places they moved to.”* (R3AP)

Another woman said:

*“In the Basic Environmental Plan (PBA) it is written that people are guaranteed to be resettled within a 2 km ratio, but this is not happening. You have families that live 6 km apart from each other, the father in one place, the son in another place. The families have been disarticulated, and they broke the strength of the people. Many women are sad and depressed because what happened here has been such a shock.”*  
(R24SM)

She continued:

*“It is very common that big families live in the houses here, they include the mother, the children, the sisters and brothers and is a meeting point for everybody around... A house is where the family and friends gather... Norte Energia doesn't respect this part. The company now breaks the agreement, written by themselves (referring to the PBA, emphasise added) relocating community members randomly among the different resettlement areas, and this caused that women are fighting for their rights.”* (R24SM)

Another displaced woman pointed out:

*“In the PBA it says that people from the same community has the right to stay together, but this didn't happen from the beginning of the reallocation process. Now we are trying to rebuild family and community bonds. Women are suffering all this more than men because they have to build friendship with people in the community one more time. The women at the end remain day by day in the community, in the family and what occurred here, violates women's rights.”* (R1AP)

According to the female displaced respondents, the difficulties of uprooting and resettlement are not shared equally because women are more linked to the home, family and communities than men because of their role and responsibility as caretakers of the family and of the duties at home. This is one of the reasons why they suffer a lot from the disintegration of communities, as they have to cope with the problems in the resettlements on a daily basis and not being able to count on help from their previous network of neighbours and friends.

As Norte Energia had stated in the PBA that people from the same neighbourhoods would be resettled in the same communities, yet didn't accomplish this responsibility in practice, they denied people their rights and devalued their way of life. Each, according to Axel Honneth (2002), has an inherent psychological dimension that is relevant to the resettled women's

experiences: that it is not only the suffering that is the injustice, but the way misrecognition is experienced by the victim. All misrecognition then, even systematic social and cultural denigration and domination of people as outlined above, is essentially a psychological condition (Honneth 2002; Schlosberg 2009). As such, two affected riverside women reported how they, or women they knew, suffered psychological problems after eviction:

*“There are people that have not been able to cope with this terrible process of moving. People from riverside communities find it very difficult to adapt to the resettlement camps. A friend of my mother had a terrible time and in the end she died from sadness.” (R5AP)*

*“Women remain disturbed, worried, about where they’re going to live, about what living conditions are going to be like, what they’re going to do to survive, how they’re going to make their way. All of that affects us a lot, our psychological outlook about our lives. And many women are ill psychologically, have heart ailments, blood pressure problems, stress, depression. So many women are ill and others have even died just at the threat of being expelled from their land, from their homes to make way for the Belo Monte lake.” (R23APSM)*

As discussed above, recognition is one of the main components of justice, and, the recognition of self-worth is essential for the individual psychological stability in a process of displacement and resettlement (Honneth 1996). Charles Taylor stated that “misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted and reduced mode of being” (Taylor 1994: 25. Cited in Schlosberg 2009). In this sense then, recognition is a human need, in which the women affected by the Belo Monte dam was struggling to obtain.



Fig.7. Riverside in Altamira city before reservoir flooding (2013). Photo: Tove Heiskel



Fig.8. Demolished houses by the riverside in Altamira city (2015). Stills from video footage: Tove Heiskel





Fig. 9. Boa Esperança district in Altamira before demolition (2013) Photo: Tove Heiskel



Fig.10 Boa Esperança district in Altamira before demolition (2013) Photo: Tove Heiskel



Fig. 11. Jatobá, where housing for 1,100 families was constructed. Photo: Regina Santos

According to many of the participants, most people who were directly affected, chose to move to the resettlements (as shown in Fig. 11 and 12), because they were the only type of indemnification that could guarantee housing near Altamira despite of the small, prefabricated houses popularly known as “sardine cans” and the lack of infrastructure there. They told that the secluded location, poor quality housing, lack of public services and security was burdening women’s lives. Women build family life on values such as care, harmony and security and these living conditions were obstructing all this.

The resettled women reported a wide range of problems that affected them and their families in general:

*“Our houses were indeed humble before, but we cannot claim that the current ones have the appropriate quality for hosting a family.” (R5AP)*

*“The house we moved to now is not big enough for our family so my mother and her husband had to go and live on the countryside. She used to look after my children while I was working. But when we came here, we could not bring all of our children with us, because I work in the city and without public transport it isn’t safe for them here. Two of them had to go and live with my husband’s mother. It is really hard to not being able to see your children more than once a week.” (R1AP)*



Other women supported problems related to the pre-fabricated houses:

*“Some houses already display cracks on the walls, some have seepages... they are not safe, windows and doors are fragile.” (R18SM)*



Fig. 12. Jatobá, resettlement area near Altamira constructed by Norte Energia. Photo: Elisa Estronioli

They also explained that problems with water and sanitation provision had become a problem for women in their daily life:

*“There is even a shortage of water. On my street, we are sometimes left three or four days without water: It’s a lot of suffering.” (R2AP)*

*“There is no adequate sanitation treatment, there are problems in the sanitation system that hasn’t been fixed. The families living close to a type of sanitation reservoir complain about constant bad smell.” (R18SM)*

*“They made a sanitation system that is not working, but from the moment it works, we will have to pay for the sanitation also. It will surely be an expensive tax and then it will be more complicated for people to handle all the living costs.” (R1AP)*

Many of the respondents said that people in the region felt ignored and trampled on by Norte Energia and the State because many had sacrificed their land and dwelling for the project, and paradoxically, now found themselves paying expensive electricity bills. They also saw that the situation for the people without access to electricity in the countryside remained unsolved. A woman from civil society stated:

*“We have been 40 years without an energy plan; people in rural areas here do not have access to energy. How can it be that a region that exports energy continues in a situation where families do not have electricity? And another issue is that electricity is very expensive, very expensive...” (R4AP)*

A displaced woman explained that by the riverside they had immediate access to water but had no electricity provision.

*“On the island we didn't pay for water and electricity. Now I am paying 360 BRL for electricity. I have to take food out of the mouths of my children to pay the electricity bill - expensive as it is... without a job, without any conditions... Life became very difficult for us.” (R2AP)*

According to the interviewees, Belo Monte as a development project had so far only included housing in Altamira and other nearby municipalities. Several women spoke about the lack of social services in Altamira and in the resettlements:

*“Here we have the Belo Monte dam which is the major project of the federal government's development project named PAC (Growth Acceleration Plan). Paradoxically, and in terms of health we still have women dying when they give birth, a natural process that could have been prevented by the provision of adequate care and follow-up during pregnancy” (R21SM)*

Other women commented that there are no collective facilities in any of the settlements:

*“The only thing that is ready is the basic health unit here in Jatobá. It is already constructed and working. The hospital, schools and other services that should be in*

*place, like collective transports, are not ready in this community. In the other settlements it is much worse.” (R1AP)*

*“Women here in Brazil are responsible for many things, to take the kids to school, take kids to the doctor, take the husband and parents to the doctor, they have a burden... and it is necessary that services are close to them, so they also have some time for themselves. And today this is our demand, that Norte Energia commit providing facilities to the settlements, to the districts built by them.” (R13PROF)*

*“The question of collective transport here is very complicated because our living expenses has increased a lot, and people need buses. There is one bus that stops here during the day and other options are to pay 30-40 BRL for a taxi or 10-15 BRL for a moto-taxi to go to the river and city centre. For people like my husband who is a fisherman, the situation is very difficult because he needs to travel to the river to work. When we lived close to the river, we didn't have to worry about transport, but now this is a major cost for us.” (R6AP)*

A majority of the women worried about the decline in human safety in Altamira and also in localities by the Trans-Amazonian highway such as in Novo Horizonte (in Brazil Novo) due to the social disorder after the construction started. The human and social problems linked to the uprooting and urban resettlement of more than 22,000 (some sources suggest up to 40,000) people in the same period as 30,000 lay workers had settled in the region had changed the dynamics of the city and increased the rates of violence. At the same time, according to two professors (male and female) from the university, there was a wave of transferees of employees in the public ministry, police and the court to other regions because these workers did no longer want to live in Altamira because of high living costs, decreased access to public services and increased social problems. A male professor said:

*“The federal police control the federal highways in Brazil like the Trans-Amazon highway, which is the main road here and is the highway with the highest rate of sexual exploitation of women and children in the whole of Brazil. It is the champion road in this respect. In 2012, this road was controlled by 33 policemen, and now in 2013 there is only 11 policemen working there. So it is a large number of policemen that got transferred to other regions at the same time as crime-rates boosted.” (R12PROF)*

#### 4.5. Employment and child-care

Even if Norte Energia employed mostly men and some women from Altamira and rural areas, several respondents talked about the need for support and rehabilitation strategies in the form of jobs or formation, because many of the resettled groups of people (riverside families, indigenous people, “quilombolas”, urban fisher folks and peasants) came from traditional communities where they depended on natural resources for their survival. A displaced woman pointed out:

*“All these people need more incentives, more training, more opportunities to be able to enter the work market. Families need to adapt, we need investment in the communities, but no such thing has been implemented, except some positions that were created in the settlements, nothing else... We are waiting and waiting, knowing that Norte Energia bought the right to build the dam with the Basic Environmental Plan, where they made commitments to improve quality of life for all resettled families, but nothing changed. People was just moved from one place to another, and the problems too, but I would say they worsened. I am certain about this because I see that people struggle more economically, that families have to survive here with all this speculation, price increases. They are even worse for economic reasons, things are much more expensive and now you also have many more bills to pay.” (R1AP)*

For women, it is even more difficult to re-establish their lives because of their position in society, where they generally, undertake all domestic work, which is fundamental for the well-being and stability of their families. Due to the rising living-costs after the dam, there is a greater need for women to contribute economically in the household, but the lack of gender sensitive policies makes it difficult for women to enter the work market or create their own job opportunities. Many had also lost their businesses and their income. The female interviewees who had been forced to close their small businesses such as hairdressing and manicure salons, had so far not been able to re-establish their activities in the resettlements because such opportunities, according to a woman from a social movement...

*“...had until recently, been restricted more powerful business people, not affected people.” (R18SM)*

Some of the respondents told that traditional gender-patterns continue to dominate the labour market, and available jobs for women are mostly associated with domestic work or other low-

wage professions. A professor at the university had followed a project where they studied the situation of working women in Altamira and she told:

*“What we observed, was that women who managed to find work, were never employed in “quality” positions. It was mostly linked to domestic services: laundress, cleaning, telephone operator, mainly secondary services. Senior positions were mainly offered to men or to those women from other states.” (R13PROF)*

The disruption of previous community bonds, like mentioned above, obstructs women to find or to keep their jobs because friends and family members have randomly been relocated amongst the resettlements or further away. As no public transport connects these areas, women are unable to meet or help out their old neighbours on a day-to-day basis. This complicates the situation for working mothers, who also are the prime caretakers of their children during workhours. After resettlement many women were separated from the persons that used to look after their children, and there were no kindergartens in the neighbourhoods where children could be safe while their mothers were working. A displaced woman said:

*“It is very difficult for the mothers, the women that work. Most of them have nowhere to leave their children; there are no kindergartens in these resettlements. The schools are very far away.” (R6AP)*

Two other interviewees spoke about an issue called Parents and Custodians Negligence that has to do with mothers or single parents that don't have anyone that can look after their children while they are at work. A woman from a social movements explained:

*“Many female employees in Belo Monte construction consortium (CCBM) or other companies has a journey starting 5am and returning at 6pm, going to the construction site and having to return according to the company's timetable...they go to work and then leave their children alone... we realize that many of these workers that do not have anyone that can take care of their children. Then the neighbours or the people nearby call the police to intervene. This concerns older children but also smaller ones; 3 or 4 years old, that spend their whole day without any sort of care. (...) These children are exposed to sexual abuse, from neighbours or others that observe that children are abandoned during the day. There are many such incidents.” (R18SM)*

When the Government decided on constructing Belo Monte with its immense regional impacts, the above problems should have been studied beforehand and included in the EIA that conditions the licensing process, not after the construction had started, in order to establish and implement preventive measures on time that can strengthen the family and protect women and children. No such measures were carried out according to the respondents. The cultural and economic impact of the loss of commons and territory was therefore aggravated by the fact that the resettlement suburbs were not in conditions to be populated because public infrastructures were not organized or not functioning properly, because Norte Energia and the Altamira municipality could not agree on who should pay the costs for the water supply, sanitation services, transport and hospitals (ISA 2015). According to the above mentioned problems that women faced on their arrival to their new homes, they have to cope in an even more vulnerable situation than before eviction having lost their livelihoods and income arrangements. The resettlement suburbs then were a rigid top-down solution for housing, but not for development as no other plan or initiative to spur economic activities had been presented or initiated. The claims of the respondents revolved unjust distribution and also recognition of their rights related to the problems they were facing after resettlement. The above problems then, according to Fraser, needs to be looked at with a “bifocal vision”, with two distinct lenses of distribution and recognition (Fraser 2007).

#### **4.6. Education**

Even if education was one of the main criteria in the PBA, no schools had been built in any of the resettlements. The children were therefore still attending schools located in their former districts. School transport had been organized by Norte Energia, but the distance to the schools made it difficult for the parents to follow up social activities arranged there, mainly because there was no public transport between Altamira centre and the resettlements. A women shared her views about the situation of education in the resettlements:

*“Women are struggling a lot with the issue of schools. This is a serious problem in the new districts because they have not constructed schools in any of the resettlements yet and this affect the dynamics of women’s everyday life. We, women have to take the children to the school bus... and when we meet at school, people have to travel to the former community to be able to participate in the cultural life of the children, and this*

*takes a lot of time, it complicates life facing so many barriers. But it also originates that women cooperate to organize things together.” (R1AP)*

There had, however, been made investments over the last five years to build new schools or improve existing ones in the rural areas of the municipalities of Altamira, Brazil Novo and Vitória do Xingu. Still, there had been a steady rise of school dropout during the construction of the Belo Monte dam. A male professor at the university told:

*“Now we have three schools that are not functioning any longer because there is not enough demand for them to be open. This has to do with the migration dynamics of people, several of our rural communities have lost both youngsters, fathers, and families because they are now working for the Belo Monte consortium. What concerns me is the period after this big construction project. So what will happen next to the youth? How will they manage?” (R12PROF)*

A priest who worked in a social movement, perceived the problems of education like the closing of schools (or not opening those that had been constructed), as a consequence of poor planning and lack of funds to pay the teachers. He also said that the same problems occurred in the health sector:

*“In the conditionals of Norte Energia’s BPA, elementary education was one of the main points. Education was included as one of the main criteria in their PBA, so they constructed many elementary schools and health centres, but none of them are working because they lack infrastructure, they are not in conditions to be opened. They don’t have conditions to pay the doctors or the teachers. 100 km from here, they constructed a health centre, but they don’t have money to open it.” (R20SM/Priest)*

Higher education and kindergartens were not amongst the initiatives that were recognized to create local development and employment on long terms and therefore didn’t figure amongst the 40 conditionals in the PBA. Kindergartens are key to enable mothers to find time to undertake paid work, and they would also employ many women. A female university professor said:

*“There was no stimulus for the broadening of university programs or courses. Quite to the contrary. If we had been given a project for higher education in the 2010-2015 period, we would be graduating students educated in law, business administration*

*social sciences, tourism by now... It seems like this was an intended neglect. They don't want to educate people with critical views, able to take on more ambitious roles. Hence people, will remain cheap labour.” (R13PROF)*

A male professor claimed that higher education needed to be recognized and initiated in order to create long-term development:

*“We continue to have a huge bottleneck in terms of investment in the university itself as universities did not figure among the PBA conditions of the Belo Monte project. This means that we won't even have the qualification of the workforce to be able to work in the Belo Monte enterprise. What you have there is a workforce that is roughly technically qualified to perform activities that do not require a lot of specialization.” (R12PROF)*

Access to quality education at all levels is an important means for delivering on promises of “equal opportunity” in unjust living conditions, because education would strengthen people’s skills to what they are able to do and enable them to compete for better jobs on the work market (Beckley 2002; Nussbaum 2003; Sen 1992; Sen 2005). Because education was one of the main criteria in Norte Energia’s PBA to provide reparations through public policies and to spur development and equal opportunities for the affected population, the resulting school failure was, according to the interviewees, unjust. The injustices linked to education therefore derives from failure in providing the three dimensions of environmental justice: distribution that is an economic issue, giving substantially more to those who have less; recognition of the capabilities and need of the local population in terms of formation and policy by including local actors when designing an education-plan for affected municipalities (Bolívar 2015; Fraser & Honneth 2003).

#### **4.7. Occupation of land**

The occupation of disused land has for some affected families, become a way to ensure survival. The occupied camp and terrain in Brazil Novo is an example of this. There, 73 families are in a struggle to keep the land they have settled on, owned by the State. Even if the people who moved there were not directly affected by the Belo Monte reservoir, the settlement figures among the consequences of Belo Monte because when construction started,



people were struck by the price inflation for housing and other living costs as well as the chaotic situation concerning security, health and education that forced them to move away from Altamira. A landless farmer told:

*“This project (Belo Monte) is directly and indirectly affecting many people. The first impact of the project in the region was the large number of people that came from other regions to look for employment opportunities... Today, due to this massive immigration, many people in the city of Altamira face problems of food, education, security, the housing... it was crazy in the city of Altamira.” (R7AP)*

A female land-occupant supported these reasons and added:

*“We are not affected by the inundation itself, but people here recognize Brazil Novo as affected by increasing prices, for example the rent, that raised from 100-200 that was what people could afford, up to 1000, 1200 BRL. Food also, and because there are few jobs... Many farmers went to work on the construction site and suddenly the work was finished, because floodgates and turbines were completed. They lost their job there and their fixed employment here. These were some of the impacts, people were not directly affected by the water, but thinking in general like this, people were directly affected by the project.” (R8AP)*

She also spoke about how society in Altamira had turned more male chauvinist after the arrival of tens of thousands of men, and this felt threatening for women and teenage girls:

*“The personal lives of women were impacted because with this giant project they mostly used male labour. These men use money as the easiest way to get women involved with them. They use money, and women entered prostitution, in teenagers this happened quite a lot. There is a lot of crimes here too, but it is smaller here, so women and their daughters are more protected.” (R8AP)*

Then she explained that people found themselves better off in the occupied camp (shown in Fig. 13 and 14) than in Altamira because they had found a refuge in an area that had more work opportunities in agricultural production and they could also grow their own crops on the land they had taken. She spoke about some of the advantages for women to live away from Altamira:

*“When people occupied this area here it was good for us (women), because people got a refuge, not the wonderful house of our dreams, as most women dream about having a castle... We got a place to live, many a decent job we could say, not the job of their dreams, but a way to survive. I think people living here distanced themselves from the project a bit, because our municipality (Altamira) was trampled over rather than benefited from the project.” (R8AP)*



Fig. 13. The occupied camp in Novo Horizonte in the municipality of Brazil Novo. Photo: Tove Heiskel



Fig. 14. The occupied camp and land in Novo Horizonte in the municipality of Brazil Novo. Photo: Tove Heiskel

Concerning people's situation in the camp, and about the authorization of land ownership, the same woman explained that this was an unresolved struggle because obtaining this was not an up-front process. Currently, they were pending to see if the State took the decision to transfer the land title (5 hectares) to the municipality or not. If this happened, they would be in a much worse situation to obtain a deed for their land, because the settlement was not wanted by the municipality that had adverted that they were going to evict the people who had settled there. She stated:

*“People are not the legal owners of the land here because this process with the authorities is going very slow but people do not give up. People have required water supply that is the most essential service, and they have to solicit legalization of their land, and people are waiting for the opportunity to collect all the requirements and take them to the government to see what they will decide about us. Depending on the municipality of origin of the persons, they will not legalise their situation. The municipality already said they will remove the people from here. We want to legalize the land directly with the Institute for Agricultural Reform (INCRA) without passing*

*the hands of the prefecture because we will have a better chance if the State manages this process.” (R8AP)*

Though the land-ownership had not yet been formalised, the proper group had measured up the land, shared it in parcels and distributed them amongst themselves. People took care and respected that some people spent more time to put up their house and crops. They had also reserved a space for the church that not yet had been constructed. The female land-occupant said:

*“We have hopes that our situation here will be resolved, now we feel prisoner of something that doesn't exist. We are struggling to obtain a document of our (individual) piece of land, that states that we can stay here legally. The people who came here in beginning of 2013 are people that really need it. (R8AP)*

In addition to this, there were many challenges in the settlement that the people were, with few means, were working to solve. A priest who had come to Brazil Novo through MAB to support people's land-struggle, spoke about main challenges of the camp:

*“Today, our biggest challenge, which is not exclusively an issue that concerns this region, the Amazon, but all of Brazil, and that is public policies. That is missing here. Basic sanitation, basic necessities, health, education, water are all major necessities, so there is a big challenge of the people to achieve this. The houses are well constructed, but there is no infrastructure here like sanitation, and water is scarce, so this kind of organization doesn't exist here.” (R20 Priest)*

Rural women provide all types of attention within their home and family, including healthcare. The lack of infrastructures such as garbage collection, provision of clean drinking water and access to medical care all surges women's care-work burden. The female respondent from Brazil Novo said:

*“Women need clean water for the children, and for our personal hygiene. We need the garbage to be collected in the districts and this doesn't happen here. The only time they collected it was during a test 6 months ago, and it didn't happen again. We need improved medical service, because when we go to Altamira, they say that they cannot attend people from our district there, that we have our own health unit. But when*

*people comes to the service here, they are not properly attended. Maybe they do not have the right material, or the nurse is not competent...” (R8AP)*

#### **4.8. Women’s body and safety**

##### *4.8.1. Recognition of fatherhood*

A public State prosecutor, psychologist and professor spoke about an increased number of children that are born without having their paternity confirmed after Belo Monte. The so-called “barraginhos” (children of the dam) are children of workers and local women, of which the father leave without any commitment. Many women get pregnant with men they don’t know the name of (the man often give her a false identity).

Being concerned with the situation of these women who live in Altamira on a permanent basis, the Public Ministry of the State initiated a project called “Recognition of Paternity” that aim to find the father of those children that are born without a registered father. Another aim was also to prevent this to happen. This was also done with the support of the Norte Energia Constructors Consortium. A psychologist at the Public Prosecutor Offices (PPOs) explained the characteristics of the project:

*“We do a call through the Secretariat for Education that has the information about all the children who has been matriculated at school without a registered father. We go to schools to convoke meetings with the mothers of these children. These mothers then give us the names and as much information as they have about the supposed fathers. Then we call for a meeting here in the Public Prosecutors Office with these men, to make them sign a declaration of fatherhood or to agree on doing a DNA test. This is more or less what we are doing now, and what we have been doing since 2013. The numbers provided by the Secretariat of Education of these children in the Municipality of Altamira, are almost as high as 2000, but until now we have only been able to reach 1217 mothers who attended the court hearing in the Public Ministry of the State or in the schools. We have obtained 418 recognitions of paternity. This recognition of paternity obliges the fathers to help providing food or to pay a fixed pension to support the sustenance of the child. In some cases, the fathers also want to get to know their children, and we look at the possibilities of visiting the child.” (R16PPO)*



On the question to what extent this phenomenon has increased after Belo Monte, the same respondent said:

*“We don’t have data prior to 2013 so we cannot do such comparisons, but to draw a parallel to another state that recently also had a major dam constructed, they had an increase of a hundred unsolved cases in their “Recognition of Paternity” project compared to prior the construction of the dam.” (R16PPO)*

One of the respondents, from the university, emphasized that many of the men who came to work on the construction site, are not single, but most of them came alone, leaving their wife or girlfriend at home. She said:

*“The women that were left behind are also affected as their men came here, many having affairs with other women. Hence, women are affected both here and there.” (R13PROF)*

#### 4.8.2. Violence

Many of the respondents explained that gender-related violence in the Amazonian region is an inherent problem that aggravated after the Belo Monte project. Women in general have a subordinated position within the family and in society because of the ruling social order in the region that stems from a patriarchist tradition where men are in power and control over their wives and female family members. In situations of personal and social change, like the ones that are generated in affected areas of Belo Monte, women are more exposed than before to physical abuse. Involuntary uprooting, the sudden immigration of 33.000 male workers and the simultaneous resettlement and destitution of the same amount of persons have put women in an even more vulnerable situation than before. Most respondents perceived that these occurrences were the main reasons for the growing rates of violence. A public prosecutor informed:

*“There has been an increase in the cases of domestic violence here in the municipality since the construction of the dam started and the cases of assassinations raised a lot according to statistics. The homicides though, are often related to questions of drugs. Drug-trafficking, robberies, thefts also increased a lot in few years. In average there*

*are two homicides per week here in the municipality, mainly related to other crimes.”*  
(R15PPO)

Although very few women are involved in drug-trafficking and criminal activities, there are many mothers who worry and suffer from the increase of such incidents in case they involve their children or other family members. A woman from social movement pointed out:

*“The impact on women’s lives here is above all related with the question of violence, when we speak about violence it is not only the violence suffered by women, but also the violence for mothers that see their children assassinated, that see the children dying in accidents... In this sense, somehow I think that violence is a very vile legacy that remains here in Belo Monte for women.”* (R21 SM)

A displaced woman talked about the constant fear women lived walking home or moving around the city, especially at night:

*“The danger of walking home when I finish work at night... the danger of assault, the danger of coming home and not having a neighbour to ask for help makes it all very difficult; the situation is difficult.”* (R3AP)

#### 4.8.3. Sexual abuse

Regarding the outcomes associated with women’s and young people’s safety in Altamira and other affected municipalities, a majority of the interviewees said that intimidations, physical violence, sexual abuse and incidents of this kind had escalated after the Belo Monte dam: A female interviewee expressed:

*“Women are the main victims of the dam, victims of so much aggression and violence that happened during the construction period. I will say not only women but children, teenagers; the youngest generation. These groups suffered a lot with the whole process because the rate of crimes involving these groups rose vastly in short time.”*  
(R1AP)

Many of the interviewees spoke about the situation of indigenous women that had been evicted from their traditional villages in the areas around *Volta Grande*. A public prosecutor told:

*“The indigenous population in Foro Seco has been dislocated to other places and many are even arriving the city, so rape also against indigenous women here in the municipal is creating major disruption.”* (R15PPO)

A functionary at the Agency for Indigenous Affairs (Fundação Nacional do Índio - FUNAI) broadened the issue of sexual violence against indigenous women:

*“The people who live in Volta Grande used to live by the river, and their lives are interconnected with the river – it is their source for life. Now they don’t have the river anymore. They have to use the road, and they don’t know how to live by the road. Many new roads have also been made, that enters into or are close to the indigenous territories, and this causes problems. Now there are a lot more not-indigenous people who live or move around in indigenous areas. They are also very close to the dam, and sometimes the workers fight with each other and run away to the indigenous area. Sometimes women come across these men when they are walking outside their village, and they get scared. There is also a big problem with alcohol amongst the men who are contracted by the construction company, who hang about these roads.”*  
(R17FUNAI)

In some of the indigenous communities that had not been uprooted, Norte Energia had started building schools and medical units. This had, according to the respondent from FUNAI, harmful implications for the indigenous women:

*“Now you also have non-indigenous people working in these villages, building schools and medical centres. To construct one of these health units, they have employed thirty men who are stationed in the village, and the women, kids and teenagers are there.”*  
(R17FUNAI)

A university professor referred to a study he had directed about sexual violence in Altamira where they had found that infractions against women have increased after the implementation of Belo Monte. He had obtained data in the *Forum of Justice*, the largest institutional archive in Altamira on the denounced cases of sexual abuse and exploitation between 1954 until



2014. He discovered that the current dynamics are very different from the time before the project. He explained:

*“It worsened a lot after 2010. The average of denounced cases between 2000 and 2010 was 10 per year. Then it went from 35 cases in 2010 to 86 in 2014, an almost three-fold increase of only sexual abuse incidents in Altamira. During the period we undertook our investigation for the project, we found that 9 in 10 cases involved sexual abuse and the other was sexual exploitation. So, we see more visibility around the problems of sexual abuse whereas problems of sexual exploitation are more unclear... This reflects the population’s ability to denounce, the police’s capacity to investigate and dismantle crimes and at the same time, the capability of the sex market to remain concealed from the State apparatus to continue its practices.” (R12PROF)*

Both the professor and the public prosecutor clarified that the rise of these types of crimes were foreseen in coherence with the arrival of 33.000 persons from other places, however this problem was not recognized in the EIA nor in the conditionals of the PBA that could initiate preventive measures. The professor continued:

*“Though we have a high visibility of the cases of sexual abuse, we do not have the same visibility around sexual exploitation, and even worse, this was not even identified in the EIA. Nothing related to this, nothing about the sexual crimes that were actually present from before, that would boost, and have boosted, due to the construction project considering that 95% of the newcomers are men, it was obvious that this was going to feed the sexual market.” (R12PROF)*

Regarding the question if there is a public support system for women who had been victims of sexual abuse, the respondents from the university and the Public Ministry of the State provided opposing information. On one hand, the psychiatrist from the Public Prosecutors Office explained that there existed a public program called *Pro Paz* (Pro Peace), which is activated when there is a case of domestic violence or sexual abuse. The victim is put in contact with the *Pro Paz* program that is entitled to help them socially and to access other health facilities. The psychiatrist explained:

*“The Ministry of Health promotes Pro Paz as a model that helps protecting the health of women who have been victims of violence. The victims are helped by a social worker, and they are given psychological support and medical care, also to prevent*

*sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy resulting from rape in cases detected up to 72 hours after sexual abuse. Being helped and heard reduces the psychological impact on these women who have been victim of domestic violence. This is a program funded by the State (of Pará), it isn't a Federal project.” (R16MPE)*

On the other hand, one of the respondents from the university said:

*“There are very few instruments that assist women victims of violence here. We do have the Women's Movement here, but this is not due to public policy or a government agency. And now, more recently, we had the Women's ward at the Police Station, but it is now closed, there was no one there to receive people. It looks like there is now a female police chief, but there are no, for instance, institutions for psychological and social support as women are victims of violence. Accordingly, there was no legal apparatus to provide a form of support and better conditions of care.” (R12PROF)*

#### *4.8.4. Sexual exploitation*

Regarding the criminal activities that affect the lives of women, the Public Prosecutor and professor explained that the large amount of men who arrived, had attracted criminals involved in human trafficking of women and female teens, provoking the establishment of brothels in the city and near the barrack areas for the workers. A respondent from the Federal Public Ministry explained that there is a dark tradition in Altamira and the surrounding region, of child abuse and prostitution that also involves poor families. The public attorney said:

*“Historically, we have many cases of violence against women, not only in Altamira, but also in the communities along the river. And from this tradition derives sexual abuse of children. There are families that sell/ give in their young daughters to prostitution. This is very common.” (R14MPF)*

The respondent from the university affirmed this information, and conveyed a case he had come across during a study they had undertaken at the university, about the issue of sexual exploitation of children, teenagers and women in the region:

*“There was this case of a family, that sent their young daughter, minor of age, she was only 13 or 14 years old, by taxi to a brothel where she worked as a prostitute, until the taxi picked her up after a day’s work and took her home.” (R12PROF)*

Then he gave some general information about the situation of the women that had come to work in the brothels on false conditions:

*“We have found a big rise in the situation of traffic of persons, especially with people arriving from the south-east region and the south of Brazil. They come here to this region with the promise of earning 15.000 Reais per week, not per month, but per week. But what they really get involved in is a situation of exploitation and slave-work with minimal living conditions. We saw this in Boate<sup>3</sup> Xingu after a police ride in February.” (R12PROF)*

The public prosecutors and the professor explained that there is a connection between big construction projects and increase of sexual exploitation. All of them referred to a police ride against a nightclub in 2013, that was ordered by the Federal Public Ministry. In the investigation that followed, they found that the nightclub was a residential brothel where the owner formed part of a human trafficking group that operated nationally. The brothel itself, was a direct consequence of the construction of the Belo Monte dam, an upshot established as an effect of the large migration of men to the city. The professor explained:

*“In the case of the Xingu Nightclub in February 2013, we concluded that there is a connection between sexual exploitation and the big construction projects. Under the investigation, we gathered all the documents we could obtain concerning the Xingu Nightclub, including owner’s bank accounts, staff network and so on, and we mapped the trajectory of this brothel and realized that it was linked to a series of other dams.*

*The owner had already been active for more than 20 years, going from dam site to dam site, setting up brothels because he knew that it would attract reliable users. We also found that he fled, either when the construction project ended or when he got arrested by the police or by law enforcement sectors. And despite the clear evidences,*

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<sup>3</sup> Boate = night club.

*like in the case of Xingu Nightclub, this man was never arrested nor punished. His court proceeding has already been concluded here, including a federal judge decision. The judge condemned him for sexual exploitation, but not for human trafficking and slave labour practices like the Prosecutor's Office had filed against him. This judge did not recognize that those situations were present. We completely disagree based on the testimonials given by the women, not all of them though, we have to admit, but according to the women that had arrived from Paraná, from the Calipial Nightclub, and women that lived in the brothel, but originally came from Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and Paraná states to work in that nightclub and from there they came to Altamira. They've demonstrated well how they were cheated as they were promised 30,000 BRL for two months' work and they didn't even receive more than 900 BRL throughout the whole period. Also, they were cheated in relation to housing facilities. They were told they would have the same conditions as they had at the previous Nightclubs, but what they had here was a sort of private incarceration, violation to their right of freedom and dignity.” (R12PROF)*

He concluded:

*“What concerns us is the existence of a connection, which is well founded. And this man (owner of club), for instance, might have gone to Tapajós from here. This does not obviously involve only him, but a wider network, he is only a part of this network... we have not yet mapped this network. We do not know what are the several faces of this network of sexual exploitation which is increasingly becoming part of the big dam projects, being embedded in the dynamics of men migration to these big projects, increasingly negatively impacting the situation of women and girls that have been sexually exploited by these networks.” (R12PROF)*

Regarding public policies that could prevent or reduce the extent of human trafficking and sexual exploitation such as police controls, a respondent spoke about the reduced capacity of the federal police force that at that time (2013) was functioning with only eleven policemen in the department. Therefore, they didn't have the capacity to do more than a minimum of control along the Trans-Amazonian Highway and the activities established near the dam. Before Belo Monte, the police arranged operations to investigate restaurants, bars and hostels by the road. With the dam, the problem of sexual exploitation expanded while the police controls reduced to a minimum. The demand for policemen grew a lot, but the State didn't

guarantee a service. According to the respondent from the public prosecutor's office, it is also difficult for the police and legal system to find people who commit sexual crimes. He explained the current situation regarding this issue in Altamira:

*“The company is not interested in having criminal people as employees, so if this happens they simply sack the person, and then it is difficult for us to find the person in question. There is a large flux of workers who enter and leave. Some commits crimes, sexually abuse and even kill, and then they go back to their home-state, and it is impossible to track them.” (R15PPO).*

A respondent from the university explained that the same problems occurred in regions with the construction of large dams:

*“Altamira and this region is not a singular case in this respect. In May this year, I attended a meeting/ conference on sexual exploitation in the context of the construction of large infrastructures (large construction projects). In this meeting, a group of representatives from Rio Madera (dam), Gerai Santo Antonio and Barajó here in Pará - de las ajozeros in the buffalo industry, which also are big constructions/ alterations. The situation is repeated in these places too, because the same developing model implemented in these regions. This is a situation that reoccur in the Amazon since the construction of the Tucuruí dam at least, in which was the first large project that was implemented by the military government in the Amazon in the 1970s, and has been repeated many times.” (R12PROF)*

#### **4.9 Security measures – repressive methods**

Regarding security measures, the public prosecutor and the professor explained that some improvements had been carried out in terms of cooperation for peace and security in the environmental licensing, although these did not figure as conditionals in the Basic Environmental Plan (PBA). Social problems, criminal activity and sexual violence were obviously going to increase, by looking at other dams that had been constructed in Brazil (Hurwitz 2013), yet no conditional had been defined in the PBA that obliged Norte Energía to implement mitigation measures or solutions to these problems, and for this reason these issues

didn't obstruct them to obtain the licenses, issued by the state, to build or operate the Belo Monte dam. The professor said:

*“The measures are not a requirement for entrepreneurs to receive the building license. It is an agreement between the State Government and Norte Energia. This does not go through the municipality to know what mitigation efforts have been implemented and what kind of responsibilities the entrepreneurs should deal with.” (R12PROF)*

The public prosecutor clarified further:

*“The truth is that they (Norte Energia) has got involved with public safety here in the municipality. We are talking about a consortium that has constructed a prison, and they established this sexual ward and they bought a helicopter for the cost of 41 million Reais, to protect public safety. Today we have this new helicopter that is managed by the constructor consortium. It is not a helicopter at service for the environmental police that already received 20 vehicles from the constructing consortium for this purpose. The civil police have five vehicles at their disposition, not only here in Altamira but they also cover nearby surrounding municipals too. They have also mounted a video-monitoring system here in the streets of Altamira. It contains about 60 cameras mounted around the city that do recordings in the city until the dam is completed. Our major difficulty is to cope here when the construction of Belo Monte is finished, the social problems will continue to grow, because the resources we have received will end. This is our worry. It would have been different if these resources had been installed on a permanent basis.” (R15PPO)*

The university professor was more critical to the efficiency of the investments that had been done to safeguard public safety because it was only distributed among very few devices, where none of them were preventive:

*“There are investments supposed to happen, but many delays, problems in terms of concentration of funding, few aspects dominate resource investment, such as expenditures with helicopter, the most famous case. There were 110 million BRL in investments, 40 million only to buy the helicopter, 25 million to construct the penitentiary. The remaining amount was targeted to 20 other things, but always in relation to a repressive apparatus in terms of public security. It is fundamental that the EIA, what we are now trying to discuss with the Federal Government, a wide*

*range of sectors, social movements, etc, that is to create in the EIA a specific line that would enable the investigation of the impacts upon children and adolescents due to their constitutional priority, as demonstrated by the Child and Adolescent Statute framework, which requires that attention should be given by the State concerning impacts happening in its territory.” (R12PROF)*

The perceptions of the respondents in the sections above, match the connotation of Boelen’s “Tower of Indifference” and “Dark Legend of “UnGovernance” as Norte Energia didn’t adequately assume concerns for women as an exposed group in terms of their “reproductive and sexual integrity and rights, for safe motherhood for violence and sexual oppression (Harcourt & Escobar 2002: 8), and no adequate measures had been taken to protect women from these risks and abuses. According to Fraser, justice requires social arrangements that permit people to be taken into account, and two conditions (like explored before) must be satisfied: First, the distribution of material resources, and second, institutionalised cultural recognition that respect for women and who know their requests (Fraser 1999). In respect of the material resources that were distributed as social compensations for the affected population, Norte Energia took decisions from the male-dominated domain of the social public space or in the “Tower of Indifference” where women have limited access. And this is, according to Harcourt & Escobar the domain where they find their gender-based concerns silenced or missing” (2002: 9). For the reason of not knowing the reality or needs of the local women, Norte Energia had not implemented adequate preventive measures to reduce the risks for sexual violence and abuse of women, but rather decided to spend a large part of the budget earmarked public policies to buy a helicopter and vehicles to strengthen the police-force’s repressive methods. Even the ward for women that had been victim of different types of violence and could assist women in situation of crisis was closed down. Preventive measures that could promote the coexistence of difference and equality in relation to gender, away from the traditional and cultural domination of women (Escobar 2006), was according to the respondents non-existent. Yet, if the company had activated mitigation effort to prevent such risks, it is difficult to imagine measures that would be feasible up against the arrival of 33.000 lay workers, other than not constructing a dam at the size of Belo Monte. From this perspective, recognition is a remedy for injustice (Fraser 1999), however in this context, recognition of women, would require more time than the scope of a construction-period to obtain such recognition.

## PART II

This section of results aims at responding the second research question of the study: *How do women, linked to social movements, react to the effects of the Belo Monte dam, and what are the results of their struggle?* To answer this question I analyze first-hand data on how the respondents organize and collaborate with or within social movements on a local level, and also how they unite and act on a national level in a joint struggle for recognition of gendered impacts, either in terms of distribution (as shown in Part I) or in terms of women's inclusion in the decision-making processes of hydropower-projects. I have also used a number of secondary sources that explain in further detail what the claims for justice are; for example, those that refer to MAB negotiations with the government to integrate into Brazil's environmental legislations and institutions to protect the interests of dam affected women and people.

### **4.10. Resistance to the Belo Monte dam: women at the grassroots**

Regarding women's struggle for rights in the shadow of Belo Monte hydroelectric facility, several female respondents explained that women in Altamira were the first to approach social movements to defend those losing out with the dam. Like outlined in the chapters above, heavy burdens are placed on people affected by large-scale development projects, and in Altamira many women took a leading role to fight for the recognition of people's rights in terms of just compensations and deign resettlement, public policies and mitigation measures for mass-uprooting, social disorder and gendered violence. A female indigenous leader explained that their struggle, today, was about getting just compensations on their own terms, but also about promoting a cultural change so that hydropower development is done with concern for the environment and with respect for diverse peoples and cultures:

*“I want that our society changes the perspective of life, so that we can continue our culture, continue our ways of life in the rural areas, in the river that is gone, the riversides of the Xingu River. We want to get away from these impacts, we want a river that is alive, where people can live in houses, with a lot of fish, with their crops (cajá, caruga), I wish the forest can remain intact, our native forests, our river, our way of life and to continue our culture and to continue to eat our traditional food that people like so much. These are our objectives to keep on fighting, that we can be*



*respected so that we can recompose our way of life that is important for us, so that we can be resettled in the way we want, like it was before the dam. It is very difficult what is going on for us – very difficult.” (R6AP)*

#### *4.10.1 Women’s participation in struggle for rights*

According to several of the respondents, many women began to participate in the struggle against the Belo Monte dam back in the 1980’s when people started to discuss the proposed project. Though the anti-dam movement wasn’t yet raised in the region, many women participated in the meetings organized in Altamira by the indigenous peoples. Soon they participated and contributed actively in the emerging struggle because at that time, according to a university professor:

*“...more women had undertaken higher education, and some had gained more strategic positions at schools, unions, township councils and the university and had good leading skills.” (R13PROF)*

The feminist organization, *Movement of Women Workers in Altamira* (Movimento de Mulheres Trabalhadoras de Altamira Campo e Cidade - MMTACC) was founded in Altamira in the late 1990’s with the objective to organize women in the rural areas and in the cities to fight and confront violence against women and children. In those years, many women were killed by their husbands, partners or ex-partners, and the grotesque case of a number of emasculated and assassinated children in the region impelled the establishment of this organization. A female professor said:

*“Women joined with the objective of face this violence, to show the Brazilian state that they would not accept this violence that was directed against women and children.” (R13PROF)*

From the negative outcomes of many other large dams constructed in Brazil since the 1970’s, such as Itaipú in the South, and Tucurí in the Amazon, women knew that mega-dams violate human rights and bring impoverishment, marginalization and violence and women are amongst the groups that suffer the most from these effects. Feminist groups therefore joined the anti-dam movement from the start, which soon could count on the involvement of several national and international environmental organizations (International Rivers, Greenpeace,

Amazon Watch), Dam-Affected People's Movement (MAB), Landless Workers' Movement (MST), indigenous organizations, church activists and the workers party movement, legal institutions and academic support from universities. An interviewee from the university emphasised the importance of feminist movement in terms of making women's claims visible:

*“The women's movement has been able to clearly demonstrate that women were being affected. And they demonstrated that there was concern in relation to everything about Belo Monte.”* (R13PROF)

A leader of a woman's organization explained that the Belo Monte conflict was primarily a struggle for social justice and citizen's rights:

*“We knew that the construction of Belo Monte would bring very negative impacts on our lives. Not only because of environmental questions, because the Xingu has a very strong relationship with women and women with the Xingu... It is our river that passes our communities... But also for other questions, above all social questions. We understood and understand that a construction of the size of Belo Monte was a scandalous thing, enormous... we understood that the construction would bring many malefic things for women, this is why women always opposed this project of development of the Brazilian government. Evidently, the government ended up taking the option of mega-projects in the middle of the Amazon. People understood that this was very bad because violence against women increases, violence in trafficking, violence in the private sphere itself.”* (R21SM)

#### *4.10.2 Women: weak in politics, strong in movements*

As shown in the first part of the results, the distribution of social and economic goods and harms brings out the results of the cultural values and practices of the dominant ideologies, in which gender, class and ethnic dimensions are embedded (Escobar 2006; Rocheleau et al. 2013). Distribution is also shaped by who holds the knowledge and power in decision-making arenas regarding the society and environment in question. According to two female respondents, a professor and an affected activist, gender justice is an important issue in many arenas but although women still face solid resistance to be recognized and included in politics

in Brazil, they participate strongly in social movements and increasingly in higher education.

The female activist said:

*“Even if we have a female president of the republic<sup>4</sup>, there are hardly any women in the parliament, in the chamber of deputies, in the chamber of legislators, the participation of women is very small, very small. So women in Brazil also need to overcome the challenge of being included in politics.”* (R5AP)

The female professor explained that women who occupy political positions usually follow the interests of those that helped them to enter politics, those that invested in them. In this context she broadened:

*These women promote projects that are not really theirs, because they are subsidized by men, by the economic interest that really drives them... therefore the expression “dirigentes dirigidas<sup>5</sup>”.* (R13PROF)

She continued by telling her own experience when she tried entering the political arena which isn't possible in Brazil, according to her, without such support:

*“I’ve already run as a candidate for state representative, but there was no adhesion to my political campaign due to this... I do not have a political trajectory to challenge what is out there.... Someone or a group would have needed to engage and support me. However, they only do that with women that are true to their sponsors under any circumstances. As they know that I won’t be attached to any group, no one sponsors me. Hence, a woman like me can never reach a governmental managing post. Women only reach up if they can count on support by political or economic groups that invested in her candidature. This is how you reach higher levels in the government. I do not have any political aims anymore because I know I would not be successful. How would they invest in a woman that does not have ties with anyone?”* (R13PROF)

Although women largely are excluded or controlled in Brazilian politics, they participate strongly in social movements. Nearly all the respondents acknowledged that women have a significant role in mobilizing affected people to fight for the recognition of their rights before

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<sup>4</sup> Dilma Rousseff was president at the time of the interview.

<sup>5</sup> Directed directors.

the company. They explained that women involve in the struggle because they see (and many have felt) that gendered violence and lack of public policies that always had troubled women and youngsters in the region, had aggravated after the Belo Monte dam. Altamira's *Movement of Women Workers in Altamira* (MMTACC) prioritize the rights of women, children and adolescents in their work. The director of the movement explained why the MMTACC had taken a position against the Belo Monte dam and the main reasons for their struggle:

*“What was the worst for us, was this question of violence against women, in all senses, when they were assassinated, when they lost their children, when they lost their husbands, so... For us, this is a legacy that cannot happen again in a project such as this. In Amazonia, it is known, there are some other projects of this size planned, the Tapajos river... what is happening? People do not want this to happen again.”* (R21 SM)

The respondents also explained that MMTACC aims to draw the attention of society to the agenda of women in the countryside and the city in order to encourage women to participate in the construction of a common struggle against all forms of social discrimination; racial, sexual, religious and political. An activist from the Black Women's Movement in Altamira told:

*“We have put on our agenda urgent demands to ensure the lives and rights of women. We face a conservative dominance in both the National Congress, which reinforces a macho culture, racist and homophobic, and in the media, which broadcasts a sexist, violent culture.”* (R24SM)

Some of the interviewees also emphasized that MMTAAC calls for action to prevent all kinds of violence from happening to women, children and adolescents and to ensure the criminalization of aggressors. They also campaign against violence to encourage victims to denounce violence and abuse and also to promote a cultural change in relation to the outdated mind-sets about women, where violence, sexual abuse and exploitation are accepted and practiced by some men. The professor who was specialized in these issues recognized the movement's success in reaching out to women and explained some of the positive results of their campaigns:

*“Perhaps one of the hypothesis of why data on sexual violence has increased is due to an increase in accusations, denunciations and complaints. This does not happen*

*overnight. This is due to a continuous dissemination of information through demonstrations, meetings, leafleting, through a wide range of events that have educated society to know that this type of crime should be denounced. We had an increase in the number of complaints, and it is important to show how this is part of women's struggle to politicize their personal relations as sexual violence and abuses against women occur prominently at the domestic and private sphere, a space that is naturalized as a place where the state should not intervene.” (R12PROF)*

A representative of the MMTACC also saw the reason for their achievement in relation to augmented numbers of denouncements as a result of a shift in the recognition of women's rights, including over their bodies. She said:

*“This is the sort of deconstruction of traditional attitudes that women have been striving for here in our city and perhaps this is the reason for the success we have today in terms of denounced cases of sexual abuse, violence against women, body injuries, threats and even homicide in our city.” (R21 SM)*

Other organizations centre on the environmental and social effects of Belo Monte. One of these is the movement *Xingu Forever Alive* (Xingu Vivo Para Sempre - MXVPS), which is an organization that has been operative since the 1980's under shifting names, to stop the building of the Belo Monte dam. It is founded with a strong participation of women, dedicated to protect the Xingu River, the forests and peoples against the social and ecological alterations caused by the hydropower plant. The coordinator of the organization told in greater detail about their activities:

*“MXVPS is now a local, state, national and international movement, working in a network of organizations that serves as a forum for participation of people and groups. These are people who are against that development model like the one promoted by Belo Monte, against generating energy from water, blocking rivers and destroying everything, destroying the forest, destroying lives in human, social, and environmental terms. All kinds of life. Within that movement there is also a women's group. And I belong to that women's organization from the Pará region and Altamira. We're all against that model, the women's organization.” (R23SM)*

Xingu Forever Alive (MXVPS) works to strengthen the position of communities, families, young people and women in terms of their citizens' rights by making visits in the field to

teach them how to fight for them. They also organize or accompany affected peoples in demonstrations. A young woman from MXVPS told about a recent demonstration they had supported, where a group of women were struggling for their rights to be resettled:

*“Women are the protagonists in the fight against Belo Monte. A few months ago, we attained a camp of women in one of the suburbs here in Altamira where the families had been evicted and ordered to move to another space. In this process, some women had not received any guarantee for new housing for themselves and their families. Norte Energia had refused to give them this guarantee. So what happened was that the affected women gathered in a camp, in a demonstration, and stayed there for 15 days, under canvas demanding a promise to be resettled by Norte Energia. Unfortunately, these women, many of them young, didn’t achieve a positive outcome of this protest. After 15 days, the company ordered, with the assistance of the military police, these women to leave the camp. It is very common here that women fight, they are not afraid of confronting the company to claim their rights.” (R25SM)*

A displaced fisher-woman explained how MXVPS stand up for affected people:

*“The only place I have found support is with the Xingu Vivo movement, nowhere else. There are many women who are in the same struggle. I believe in these brave women who fight for what’s right and carry out their daily struggle, the struggle will be victorious. because this is our hope: that we will fight and we will win.” (R2AP)*

In addition to all this, the respondents from the MXVPS explained that they run a partnership with indigenous communities by the Xingu River such as the Arara tribe, and also Munduruku communities from the Tapajós River that until recently (August 2016)<sup>6</sup>, were threatened by the construction of several mega-dams on the River. These dams would have violated people’s rights even more than the Belo Monte dam, because the project included five large dams, which would cause even more ecosystem impacts to the river and forest and a lot more indigenous peoples would be directly affected. A female indigenous leader

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<sup>6</sup> On August 4th 2016, Brazil’s Federal Environmental Agency (IBAMA) announced the cancellation of licensing for the polemic São Luiz do Tapajós mega-dam, the largest hydroelectric project planned for the Amazon (IR 2016).

emphasized the importance of joining forces with different movements in the struggle for the affected people's rights:

*“The only thing that can guarantee our rights is to fight for them through social movements. It is the only way to obtain a dialogue with the government. Fortunately, when people are under pressure because of the things that are going on here, all this disaster, this also makes the group stronger. Indigenous villages, indigenous leaders from the city and many social movements have joined forces, because we all know that our collaboration will reinforce the fight and the people will be stronger in the struggle for just compensation and the recognition of our rights.” (R6AP)*

The leader of MXVPS explained that the organization was in the process of forming alliances with many other women's groups in the Amazon, like the Easter Amazon Forum, and they participated internationally with the Pan-Amazon Forum together with organizations from Bolivia and Peru. She said:

*“We come together to discuss these situations, these development projects, and also to expand our movement so that we can confront those projects by always saying ‘no’. Together we fight so this destructive model of generating energy, of mineral production, is definitively scrapped. That model is no good.” (R23SM)*

Another task of the Movement, based on their work in the communities, was to show the government of Brazil and other countries that the local production model was the only one that works in the Amazon, and it needed support to improve the lives of people. The coordinator of MXVPS continued explaining:

*“The indigenous people know what they want to do to improve their lives. They know. The only thing is that they don't have any investments. Farmers, women farmers themselves, know what they need to improve their work, to produce better. But the government doesn't invest in that. Fisher folks know. The communities in the cities know what the best investment would be to improve production and living conditions. But the government doesn't invest in that. So public development and policies for society, for all of those communities that live in misery, is something that the government does not invest in. So we know what development models work here, that do not destroy, that can improve living conditions, that improve economic conditions, we know what they are. But the government doesn't listen and doesn't want to know*

*about that. It knows about big money, big investment projects involving a lot of money, to benefit small groups like what is happening with Belo Monte or other projects elsewhere in Brazil and in Latin-America. So all of this is very serious and we, we women who are considered care-takers of life, life as a whole, not only human life, but life as a whole, like our planet, which is our great home, nature, the environment. We have an ethical commitment and a responsibility to fight for what we want so much - a human responsibility towards current and future generations on our planet.” (R23SM)*

Some of the respondents who participated and collaborated with several organizations, explained that today there is a division between some of the social movements in Altamira. In 2008, the MXVPS was composed of nearly 60 collaborating entities, the MMTACC and other women’s movements between them, and they had great capacity to mobilize civil society. When the Belo Monte project appeared, there was a cohesive organization against the dam, but since 2012 when the Management Committee of the Basic Environmental Plan (PBA) was established, many of the organizations revised their position in relation to the Belo Monte project. Many groups joined the Plan and even supported the construction of the dam under certain socio-environmental conditions, and thereby obtained resources, while the MXVPS maintained a more radical resistance platform (Pont Vidal 2015). The female professor said that this process had debilitated the collaboration between women’s movements in Altamira:

*“What I observe is that the movement has been weakened and there has been this stereotype of a women’s movement that no longer represents their demands systematically. There some people that present themselves as a movement, but mostly uses this as means to obtain resources, establish political capital and so on... Now, it is true that there are some resistance voices in the movements and against Belo Monte, who firmly opposing to it, but other members of this movement are being more influenced by the project and the deals Norte Energia’s offers, letting themselves be carried by this development wave and looking at how they can benefit from it.”*  
(R13PROF)



#### 4.10.3 Women and education

One of the interviewees from the university uttered that she tried to detach and stay neutral from the conflicts within and between Altamira's civil organizations, and instead participate and involve in their activities, like other professors did. She explained that they often participate in discussions, seminars, plenaries, round tables that social movements organize and vice versa. Two of the professors told that they sometimes collaborate with the civil organizations and explained in what manner:

*“Every year we organize debates, where we invite the women's police, district attorneys, representatives from the education and health sectors to discuss policies for women and for their safety. Hence, the university is integrated... we also participate in women's parades and street demonstrations... this is also connected to the projects we run... the university's integration has this kind of format.” (R13PROF)*

Another respondent from the university explained that they are working to improve and implement new programs to obtain a more including education for the peoples of the region, because amongst the most underprivileged groups after the Belo Monte project, are the women from the lower social classes that normally cannot access higher education. They continue to work at home or in low-pay positions in the city or in the field. Education is therefore an instrument that would allow uprooted women from the cities, rural areas and the forest to break out of these traditional patterns to gain working proficiency and economic sovereignty over their own lives. Like a respondent put it:

*“The dream for education needs to advance, in Brazil we achieve universal education, we now need to advance in the quality of education and also professionalization for women.” (R21 SM)*

The same program included other marginalized groups that would not have a chance to attend university in any other places in Brazil. The professor who directed the course called “Ethnicity and Development” at the University of Pará in Altamira, explained the criteria for being accepted as a student and the visions and objectives of the course:

*“Seventeen students have been admitted, amongst them are farmers, twelve quilombolas (people who are afro- descendants), eight indigenous persons, four from the black movement and one student is “ribeirinho”. One student is also a*

*fisherwoman from the Xingu River and a displaced woman. It is an emblematic course because it deals with ethnicity and development that builds on a Latin-American understanding of sustainable development. It is critical to the mainstream idea of sustainable development as it is designed from the point of view of indigenous and traditional communities in Latin America. Our challenge is to think out sustainable projects for the region in a very diverse context as well as contradictory. Diverse and contradictory in respect of the massive scale of resource exploitation and homogeneity of the development model that has nothing to do with ethnicity and development or sustainable development. What is very important is that it is actually a proposal for education at university-level of graduation. It only exists here in Altamira, it doesn't exist anywhere else in Brazil.” (R12PROF)*

One of the female students who were attending this course, an activist from MAB stated that this particular course was a result of a victorious struggle of social movements' and their interactions with the university. She explained that education serves as a tool to strengthen their struggle, because it was very important for many groups within the affected population to count people with the right knowledge that can argue, formulate claims and take leading roles in the fight for recognition of rights and compensations:

*“...because it was the struggle of the social organizations that did this. It was a necessity to place the people inside the university, which is not for the people but for the elites, so people made this course happen. It is therefore much more special, that people struggled to be able to graduate and get the right education. People need researchers that are ours, that come from here and also are our lecturers. It is highly important. And people continue studying, they specialize in human rights, because it is necessary to learn the regulations also for the people in struggle. This way, the affected people are not only counting on other people that don't know, but on people that have the right knowledge to be able to help others. So in this manner we enter a path of continuation of this knowledge, so we have somebody that learns and shares with us... the knowledge is not ours, the knowledge is also shared. It is also about showing the knowledge that these traditional communities have, to bring the Amazonia at the centre of knowledge, because the Amazonia has a millennial knowledge, of millennial peoples, and this is not recognized...” (R4AP)*

The university course was an outcome of the efforts of the most proactive professors in the university and their collaboration with social movements as a way to provide the privilege of higher education to marginalised groups.

According to the ideas of Young (1990), which also are applicable in discussions about the access to education, part of the problem of injustice and part of the reason for unjust distribution, is a lack of recognition of group difference where customary patterns of opportunity and oppression amongst social groups, determine the outcome of such distributive injustices. The lack of recognition results in the exclusion of people at an individual and cultural level (also in access to education), and make them less esteemed in the larger cultural and political realms (Schlosberg 2004; Young 1990). As such, does misrecognition towards women deny them access to freely participate in political fields, as the female professor explained above: it constrains them and their political power. Likewise, in the context of this study, unhindered, local, female politicians would be more likely to defend dam-affected women's interests by recognizing their cultural and environmental dependence and gendered differences. For similar reasons, Young (1990) and Fraser (1995) see that the lack of respect and recognition of a group (and individuals), such as women, result in a decline in the group's membership and participation in institutional arrangements and in political arenas. As Schlosberg points out "If you are not recognized, you do not participate. In this respect, justice must focus on the political process as a way to address both the inequitable distribution of social goods and the conditions undermining social recognition. Democratic and participatory decision-making procedures are then both an element of, and a condition for, social justice" (Schlosberg 2004: 519).

#### **4.11. The role of MAB in woman's rights struggles**

As established and discussed above, the main players in the development of a social and environmental justice discourse have been and continue to be, a wide range of movements and organizations linked in the first instance, to civil rights and also to the environment, especially in resource extraction conflicts. The activities of the social movements are mainly organized locally in communities, but they participate and act under the defence and guidance of justice concepts that are supported and developed by movements such as the Brazilian Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB). In this way, popular claims for social and

environmental justice have large support and coherence in all the areas of Brazil affected by large dams, trying to influence both public policies at different scales, from the local and national to the international.

The MAB has more than 20 years of practice in organizing and winning battles about territory, water and energy sovereignty. A female activist explained that MAB had joined the anti-dam movement in Altamira in an important moment, because other social movements there were debilitated after decades of fight and resistance:

*“MAB came in the right moment to Altamira. The movements in the region already existed such as the women’s movements, but they were tired after 30 years fighting the dam... it was a long struggle. Companions of ours went to Brasilia for 15 days ... we went to Belem several times in caravans, it was 30 years of battle and when the construction of Belo Monte started, the movement was weaker than before, we had lost a bit of our courage. How were we going to continue? Then MAB came and made the group stronger, they empowered the group, they organized people in the cities, in the rural areas. I would say that MAB cannot leave the region now, they have to stay with us, with the social movements that already existed. It is very important.” (R4AP)*

MAB promotes cultural, political and economic development for the Brazilian people, both in terms of material resources and citizenship rights. They see the need to move away from the current energy development model that increases and deepens inequity, both between the North and the South, and between the economic interests behind hydropower dams and impoverished communities (Schlosberg 2004). A significant part of MAB’s work happens in communities, also in remote places. On a local level, they place human resources (MAB militants) with specific knowledge and expertise to assist communities at grassroots-level to unite, organize and act to protect their interests. At a national level, they connect with a broad range of other social movements and labour organizations that fight for social recognition and reparations of the harms caused by other large dams or other conflictive resource extraction projects or large infrastructures. To create such alliances across Brazil and Latin America, MAB arranges regional, national and international meetings (and participate in such assemblies organized by their allies). In this way, they connect affected peoples in a local, national and international struggle demanding laws and public policies to protect them with a broad support in the people.

#### *4.11.1 MAB's agenda for women: participation and organization at the grassroots*

In the last years, MAB has deepened the discussion about the oppression of women in the context of dams, and have taken action within the movement to develop their insights about this issue and implement women's claims on their agenda. As seen in chapters above, there are many challenges to overcome, both in Altamira and nationally, to obtain recognition of these impacts in society and in Brazil's energy development politics. Within the Movement they also seek to strengthen the participation and women's political integration in all its bodies, encouraging women to take on leading roles within coordination of grassroots groups and direction of regional working groups and bring them into their national network of women's programme. In this way, MAB is working to map the issues of impacts on women, based on first-hand information. This data is then used to develop a more complete agenda for women within the Movement at different scales and to make political claims. A female MAB militant explained their work strategy:

*“Our first step was to identify that women were the ones most affected. The second step was to give meaning to women's organization within the movement ... although they were always present... through the creation of platforms around Brazil where women could define their objectives in the Movement, this was the second step. And now the third step, which is our challenge, on how to define women's issues and, thereafter, how to transform these issues into public mobilization, attracting women and having more concrete achievements. This is our next step.” (R18SM)*

On a national level is MAB working to implement their recommendations in the building of national policies and legislations in favour of affected people's rights with the Federal Government. Until today, no legal framework exists in Brazil that can guarantee dam-affected communities and persons protection (MAB 2011). One of the MAB militants that was interviewed for this study, said that MAB promotes the implementation of plans and programs to strengthen women's position and to obtain equal economic, social and political opportunities for men and women. Another key issue of their fight, is to make compensations regulated by legal guidelines, so that it is the laws that establish the parameter for expropriation, compensation and resettlement in all the places dams are built in Brazil, so that people are not in the hands of a powerful company (guided by economic interests) that sets

the standard for their compensations, where they are condemned to lose out. The struggle for women in MAB is also to make sure that a broad range of social and environmental issues that hit women especially hard, such as those discussed in the first part of this research, are recognized, prevented or compensated. MAB therefore counts on strong participation of women at all levels of their organization, and deals with the issue of dams and gender systematically by adapting their programs to encourage more women to participate within the organization itself and by creating programs and activities for women in the places of impact. A female MAB militant said:

*“Women have been the first here in the Amazon region to take on leading roles, the first to approach the Movement with the aim of organizing themselves for demanding their rights... championing the struggle, heading meetings, displaying willingness in learning and knowing what can be done... they are very active and play a prominent role and organize grassroots groups.” (R18SM)*

Another woman supported this view and stated:

*“Women know what is going on and they are in the struggle to guarantee the right of their families, their friends, their neighbours, their relatives... This fight does not only include these, but also the region, the territory, the respect for the whole. (R4AP)*

*“Only social movements bring attention to these issues and the fact that women are distinctively affected by those projects.” (R1AP)*

The respondents linked to social movements, expressed that MAB is an important tool for the affected people, because they assist them and bring them together, they hold local, regional and national meetings and courses, and they have capacity to unite the force of the people at different scales. MAB gives people a hope for change. A displaced women told:

*“MAB entered my life in a moment when I did not know where to look for help. I arrived home from work and I had an invitation for a meeting with Norte Energia, to a sectorial meeting. I was in this meeting and saw a mountain of absurd things that I had never seen before, and I did not know where to go. Somebody told me: you have MAB, the people of MAB are here and you can talk to them about what you can do. And he gave me the telephone number, I called and I met up with them. I discovered that I was not alone, that there was a place where I could go and fight for my rights,*

*and they taught me about these rights in the first place. Sometimes people speak about fighting for their rights, but they don't know exactly what these rights are. And there I got information, I got studies, and I learnt what these rights were that I had to fight for, that I had to run for: the rights to housing; the right to a better life; the right itself to say no in the case I did not want something. And during these 4 or 5 years I just learned, I learned in the study groups, I learned attending courses, I learned about the identity of the community in the meetings, in the activities, that our rights were many and you need to know them to achieve compensations. I learnt that it's not the people in the company that is going to say what rights I have or not, they can try, but I need to know what rights I have and never give them away, not to get scared and instead run after them.” (R3AP)*

Another respondent stated that many uprooted women have looked for MAB to make sure that Norte Energia accomplishes the many responsibilities they have on their behalf that yet isn't resolved. She told:

*“Otherwise the Company will leave when they are finished, with all the problems behind and we, the people here, will suffer from this in the future. This is why we need to organize ourselves around the Movement of People affected by Dams (MAB).” (R1AP)*

Another activist explained that people who seek for MAB believe in a positive outcome of their demands, however it is a challenge to reach out to all the affected people:

*“People realize that this kind of struggle may in fact guarantee some rights for them. Still, there are few people who participate compared to the large number of affected families here.” (R18SM)*

Like mentioned above, MAB follows an organization model used everywhere in Brazil; they work directly with affected towns to strengthen the force of these communities by organizing grassroots groups where their specific claims are at the centre. In towns with linkages to MAB, people manage their own work, yet they can count on the skills and collaboration of the MAB militants that live and work in affected areas to stay near the communities that need

their support. The occupied camp Novo Horizonte in Brazil Novo<sup>7</sup> is a case that serves as an example to show how MAB organizes people at the grassroots. There, MAB had placed two activist; two priest that had collaborated with the Movement for a long time, to help the occupants to gain the rights to stay on the land and also to obtain provision of water and sanitation. One of the priests told:

*“We came here in the very beginning of this project, this mega-project of Belo Monte. Our objective was to work with the spiritual side, as representatives of the church and involve us in the situation of the affected people, together with MAB... When we came here to Brazil Novo, we found this group of people that had occupied this land, and we came here because they stayed here without any form of organization and without commencing the formalization process of the occupied land. We saw from the first day we came that they (municipality) wanted to eliminate this camp, so we got involved and we started the process with the authorities to legalize this land. Today, this group of people, 73 families, all identify with the MAB.” (R20PRIEST)*

#### 4.11.2. Claims and spaces for action

Regarding women’s claims on a national level, MAB has formulated a number of recommendations that concerns the protection of women’s rights, which they demand the Government, IBAMA and other state agencies to implement in their plans for future and current dam-projects, including Belo Monte. These claims are found in a MAB report called *“The Energy Model and the Violation of Human Rights in the Lives of Women Affected by Dams”* (MAB 2011: 31-32), and have the objective to solve the problems deriving from mal-distribution and misrecognition as discussed in the Part I of the results and discussion of this thesis. The specific claims are reflected in Box 3.

Regarding local claims and spaces of action in the context of the Belo Monte dam, MAB and other allies often manifest their demands in demonstrations and in road blockades such as the Trans-Amazonian highway, because this method is the most efficient to be heard. These

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<sup>7</sup> See the first section of findings under “Occupation of land”.



protests are mainly directed against the construction company. According to a landless farmer and MAB militant, the vindications of affected peoples are broad but mainly cohesive. They include many issues regarding public policies that are essential for people to live in dignity.

He said:

- We demand that IBAMA and the licensing bodies in the states of Brazil identify, measure, qualify and register systematically the particularities and necessities of women affected by dams in their Environmental Impact Assessment studies and reports;

- We require that IBAMA and the licensing bodies in the states implement compulsory programs and projects assigned women to mitigate rebuild, restore, indemnify and compensate the losses women affected by dams;

- That municipalities and state governments, under all circumstances, must ensure all women affected by dams immediate and adequate assistance to face their new reality brought on by the entrepreneur, leaving the cost to the construction company;

- That women affected by dams are assured broad participation in all stages of planning, implementation and the operation of the dam;

To guarantee the rights of women, they need to organize themselves and fight, both to influence and assure participation in the Movement, and to consolidate their social, economic, political and cultural rights in society. With the objective to strengthen the political participation and ensure the recognition of them as subjects of their rights, we propose:

- To create a working group coordinated by the Secretariat of Human Rights of the Federal Government to investigate the situation of violence against affected women.

- That the Government create a working group with the participation of MAB within the system of Eletrobrás, to design criteria for politics regarding affected populations. Also, to create equal measures and rights for affected women;

- That the State create public policies to attend affected women, to guarantee them the access to information, participation, and conditions to confront situations of human rights violations;

- That the State, through the Health Ministry, creates a program to make an accurate investigation of disease in vulnerable, affected populations, and create conditions for access to appropriate treatment and implement means of prevention.

- That the MAB continue to develop spaces and mechanisms to provide and promote the effective participation of women.

Box 3. MAB claims on protection of women. Source: The Energy Model and the Violation of Human Rights in the Lives of Women Affected by Dams (MAB 2011)

*“These protests cover many issues, the compensations, roads, the asphalt, energy, water, the education, health and security... The vindications of our mobilizations go in this sense, with some difficulties but people try to move forward in this way (...) In the case of Belo Monte neither Norte Energia or the Government respond to our requests. Unfortunately, they only listen under pressure, and this is why we need to arrange more energetic happenings like closing the highway, protest in the streets or occupy some public facility.” (R7AP)*



Fig.15. Roadblock of the Trans-Amazonian highway, organized by MAB in Altamira (2015).

During the days of fieldwork for this study, MAB blocked the Trans-Amazonian highway as illustrated in Fig.15, to force Norte Energia to start talking to them and solve the housing situation for the 500 people that remained living in the reservoir’s flood-areas, but had not yet been guaranteed compensation or resettlement. People remained on the road waiting for the company to receive their representatives. One of the protesters said it was getting more and more difficult to negotiate with the delegates of Norte Energia, and people were losing faith that they would provide housing for the group of families in question. The company was

working under economic pressure to finish the dam as quick as possible, the work they should have carried out in the city or resettlements was not prioritized. A female MAB militant explained:

*“People need to organize themselves otherwise they will be totally disadvantaged. In a project like this, the priority is not the people, but economic and financial issues of their project. If we finally sit down with Norte Energia and with the delegate representing the Government here, we will demand a solution for housing and accommodation, many people are excluded from the official records that would allow them to be resettled. This is why people attend this roadblock, to be heard and respected... We need to make sure that the company fulfils their obligations and agreements before the dam is finished.” (R4AP)*

Another female MAB militant said:

*“We arrange demonstrations and roadblocks to make our demands heard about housing. The main issue is housing and the resettlement of the people that were ignored by Norte Eneria in the areas directly impacted by the dam, those that will be flooded. Many families were excluded by Norte Energia. 4000 families were included but apart from these, the rest of the families are put aside without being offered compensations, and this is our main fight. People need their rights guaranteed.” (R18SM)*

Another noteworthy activity that MAB have created to strengthen women’s participation and voices is the Arpillera project that is active in many dam-affected areas in Brazil. A displaced woman explained the features of this project:

*“MAB works with women as authors of their own history, as the main characters. People attended several courses where women learnt to recognize their own history, it was about complicity, to have a space where they could speak without restrictions, where they could tell about what in fact affected them, about home and about the project, what was their understanding of the way they were treated by the company. We had some courses where we met people from abroad, from the Marcha Mundial*

*das Mulheres*<sup>8</sup>, they said we should think what it meant to be a woman, how we should look at ourselves, how we should place ourselves within this project, about the violation of our rights. Initially, people understood how much Belo Monte affected them, people saw what they were denied, the things that were defied in our lives. In these seminars we have the Arpilleras<sup>9</sup> and these embroideries represent our history, what affects us, what afflicts us, how we are treated. Actually, it was about women starting to know our rights and what is violating these rights, for us to be autonomous and start fighting.” (R3AP)

The respondent above referred to the project called Arpilleras which is an artistic project that derive from a pacific protest of Chilean women during Pinochet’s dictatorship, to denounce and make visible the human rights violations at that time through brightly-coloured embroideries made of clothes from missing relatives. The images of these embroideries showed political imprisonments, repression and violence. A female MAB militant described the project further, in which had been adapted the context of Belo Monte and other large dams around Brazil:

*“The Arpilleras activity in Chile was seen as a woman thing, trivial and without much importance, the military regime didn’t give much attention to that and women could actually expose this outside the country and strengthen their resistance against the dictatorship. So when MAB redeems this technique, it is with the same political purpose of the original Arpilleras, it is aimed at denouncing rights violations while strengthening the resistance of the affected women. Within this strategy of broadening the work of the Movement and showing women’s realities as well as inviting them to participate in a project of their own, we adopted the technique, organized meetings where women had the opportunity to embroider the Arpilleras and express rights*

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<sup>8</sup> Women’s World March

<sup>9</sup> The original project of “Arpilleras” derive from Chile under the dictatorship, where women demonstrated their resistance against the dictatorship (1973-1989) by making embroideries from clothes of missing relatives, representing their own stories. This activity got international attention.

*violations and also had the opportunity to discuss their situation and to get organized themselves within MAB. This was something we evaluated as very positive and that caught attention of several sectors to the Movement's work. The denunciation against the violations has echoed positively and enhanced itself through the employment of an artistic language, a different language from that we were used to. This was very good and strengthened the position of the women in MAB, it made women positive and interested in participating in the Movement. It was good for the self-esteem of the affected women that were organized in MAB. This is something that we are still reaping the rewards from, it will even be the object of an exposition at the Latin American Memorial... Arpilleras from all over Brazil will be featured and MAB women have helped to collectively choose which ones would go there. Besides being a beautiful technique, this is a process with a great political force. This is what interests us. We will take advantage of this to enhance the Movement and women's organization and struggle.” (R18SM)*

Participation and visual communication of women's activities and claims are fundamental for the actions undertaken by women in MAB. The images in the Arpilleras reflect the lives or thoughts of the women who made them, and represent their daily life and hardship after the construction of a large dam. The project gives a voice to women affected, and distribute their claims for recognition to a broader audience, shaping and creating new stories and beliefs about women and dams, adopting a method that was used by oppressed women under Pinochet's dictatorship in Chile to communicate their political claims. Each woman who participate in the project around Brazil today, contribute in activating a different discourse on women and large dams, that derive from concrete experiences or perceptions of the individual, determined by her place within Belo Monte's or other large dam's social and cultural transformations. The Arpilleras project therefore contests mainstream discursive regimes about dams by producing other sets of narratives, other visual productions that adopts local realities and thoughts, in which contribute to the political project promoted by MAB, bringing women to the centre of attention (Willemen 1994). Women are the creators and protagonists of this project, and because they directly and openly suffer the resulting problems of the Belo Monte dam, the women in MAB make these problems and their claims known, recognized and seen in the Arpilleras project.



Fig. 16. Embroidery from the project Arpilleras about large dam's impact on women. Foto: MAB

#### 4.11.3. Achievements and challenges

What MAB strives for has a lot to do with women: the right to be resettled, the right to a new house, the right of being able to restructure their livelihoods, the right to cheaper access to electricity, the access to water, etc. All these issues on MAB's agenda favour women, and in Altamira the resettlement of 22, 000 people (some sources suggest up to 40,000) has only been possible through the Movement's dedicated work and struggle. In terms of consolidated public policies that attend the affected women, there are non-existent. MAB and other social movements have not been able to achieve this yet. Still, the respondents could tell that women and people today feel that MAB's work and dedication have been successful, because a complete resettlement project was done in Altamira, so that a majority of the uprooted families would have a house to move to. The resettlements have big problems, a region with many problems that still has to be recognized and resolved by the company and the



government. An affected women shared her thoughts on the positive outcomes of MAB's struggle:

*“People feel victorious because during the process people learnt, together with MAB, to organize ourselves within the communities. This is one of the most important legacies that MAB showed us. Today we have persons within the community that understands this process of organization that will face the fights we have ahead. In this respect, the organization of women has been very important for the resistance. We need to make the company understand the conditions people are living under so that they respect our rights.” (R1AP)*

Another woman from the social movements told about the positive outcomes from their demonstrations and road blocks have had:

*“We spent almost the entire year of 2014 campaigning and denouncing that the company-led socio-economic registration had excluded hundreds of families here in Altamira. We took part in meetings with the company, calling for an increased participation of the affected to discuss, organizing demonstrations... a full year of activities towards this aim and, by the end of the year, the company had finally accepted to register those families that were left out. This was one achievement made possible through the Movement's complaints. However, there are no assurances yet that these new families that were registered will actually have access to housing. As for now, they've only been granted with the right to compensation, which is very little. Now our next step is to transform this right into an actual right to housing.” (R4AP)*

Regarding Belo Horizonte, the occupied land in Brazil Novo, MAB's base-group in the community had been able to achieve many positive results for the inhabitants there. A Priest working with MAB and a female land occupant explained what their perceptions were about their struggle there:

*“It has been a wonderful experience to see how people act, to see their resistance, to see how they have overcome obstacles with the municipality, police and the public order. People are very intelligent, and they take the initiatives. The proper group took the initiatives to organize the rules in this settlement. It is amazing to witness the Movement of Affected Peoples that work with the logistics, giving their support to that*

*people here find the strength to fight for their land. The Movement is very linked to the camp here, now people identify with it.” (R20Priest)*

A male land-occupant said:

*“I always follow the Movement because with them I have been fighting, fighting, fighting, and in the end, and thanks to the struggle, I achieved a piece of land.” (R9AP)*

A female land-occupant and MAB militant continued:

*“Firstly, we have accomplished to remove the minimal period of integration, which would give the municipality the right to expulse the people here from the land. The second victory was that we have been connected the official electricity grid, so now all the houses here have electricity. The third triumph was the artesian well... we won a trial about water in the Government, and now Norte Energia has one year to build this well. The forth triumph was to obtain 100 houses, so when people get the release of the land, when every person have obtained their document, we will get a house from the Government, and this thank God was won, through this wonderful fight of the Movement. When people obtain the legalization of the land, the Government will give permission to build 100 houses. And people want to give these houses to the people that attend the mobilizations, the meetings, so people know that the persons that participated will have a house there.” (R8AP).*

In Altamira an affected woman linked to the MAB explained that in her view, one of the main achievements of the Movement, concerns the way women have participated in a common struggle for change:

*One of the greatest victories that people have obtained... in truth, is this question of the organization of affected women, it is very important that women are united. People perceive that we make a change in the community, that we contribute in society, and many support our resistance and our lasting fight for our rights. We have learnt that it is a question of structure, people needs to be organized, the company and authorities have to understand the difficulties people undergo here, the reality that people are facing so they can guarantee people deign living conditions, that's our rights. Everything we obtained so far, has been possible because we went through this*



*process together with the Movement. (R1AP).*

A female MAB activist pointed out that a major challenge for the Movement has to do with the fact that MAB's work, based on grassroots participation, is very small compared to the work of Norte Energia that has decades of experience in the hydropower sector to deal with the suppression of organized movements, which have emerged through the people affected by dams. In this respect, it is challenging for the Movement's activists to motivate the people affected and make them believe that they can make a change by joining them. She explained:

*“Norte Energia inherits this type of process mainly due to the infrastructure they possess, the presence of teams from their sector negotiating with the families and spreading rumours when it suits them. Therefore, we face a very unequal struggle. In many ways, this is also a dispute for the minds of the families as the affected often believe that confronting won't lead to any results at all. The education here is structured in a way that makes people believe that they don't have enough autonomy to decide their futures. We live amid these contradictions, which makes our struggle harder. But this is the right thing to do and that's why we keep on doing this despite all the current difficulties that we face.” (R18 SM)*

In MAB's National Meeting held in São Paulo in 2013, the Secretary of the Presidency, Mr. Gilberto Carvalho, held a speech in front of about 2000 affected people from all over Brazil. He spoke about how the collaboration between MAB and the Government has initiated a process to design new laws to protect affected people. The speech is not specifically about women, but it was worth including this information because it illustrates some of the achievements of MAB, such as starting the process of constructing legislations for affected people in collaboration with the Government. This speech was held two years before the fieldwork for this study, and in this period nothing in respect of such legislations. However, making the Government recognize the social problems of dam-development, is a result of decades of struggle by MAB and other social movements allies (Box 4).

“I wanted to tell you, and to tell us, that it is very important that this discussion, this participation of MAB and the general movement, in the discussion on the ways of the Government. This is why we created a permanent committee; we have regular meetings with MAB, and in a very adequate way, with expert people. Then we organized another committee, with other groups, with the petrol unions and with other movements in this field, to discuss about the energy model.

I want to tell the truth, the results of this committee are not now those that you are expecting. However, the seed was planted and despite many things need to be recognized inside the Government, I am certain that there will be a result. The first is precisely the decision for a final document on a national policy that we are finishing, for the people affected by dams.

Even there are people here, from the Government, interviewing you, talking to you with care... Because the Ministry of Planning, the Secretary of Strategic Issues are making interviews precisely to give content, to give a base, to help this policy, to discuss the concept, to discuss the nature of the people affected by dams.

We are starting the work here, in the meeting, for the people to take concrete steps, so this policy that recognizes the debt of the Brazilian State with the affected people, is finally formalized. And this is very important. I can tell you with full certainty, on behalf of the President Dilma, that now, this year, it is secured that the President will sign the Act, will sign the document that recognizes, that institutes the national policy for the affected people; and institutes the recognition of the State of the social debt, the economic debt, the employment debt that the Brazilian State has with the people affected by dams. This is my definite word... (APPLAUSE)

But this is not all... this a document that gives guarantee of a recognized right; respecting the right of every person, respecting the social rights of those people affected (APPLAUSE), respecting the rights of those that have been hurt, respecting the rights of the workers that built the hydroelectric and therefore work for the system, it is possible...

This is why we organized a committee with workers of civil construction and the construction companies. And we are showing de facto, in reality, the situation of the living conditions of the workers that today built the hydroelectric projects. For those that have shelter, slums, that are more adequate for animals than for human beings, for those that do not have a decent food, do not have security... it is possible to make progress; we can invest in this. And now, thanks to this committee, this is happening, I know it is happening because I have personally visited many of these places, supervising, bringing up the attention of the companies.

This also the way, you cannot anymore make an intervention, for example to build a road or whatever, without respected the rights, without paying compensations, without making a survey, without respecting the families... And this is what we want to achieve, this is our commitment that we assume with you. That we cannot do anything without respecting the 169 ILO Convention that determines the consultation to the indigenous peoples, quilombolas and traditional peoples. We are thinking of applying this now; we are working in this sense. And we are increasing our supervision on the licenses, in each project, in each permission, from now on, it will need to be stated that all capital to be invested will be enough to cover all costs derived from the investment, to recover the life of the affected people. Even if we do not agree, it is democratic... I told you once but I will repeat, your

role is to put pressure on the Government, to put pressure on the companies. And the people that are militants, that are in Government, they have to change the nature of the State, to place it beside the poor, the small people. Because Lula always said so: “every time the big companies cross this door they are asking for millions, why can't we spend millions on the people that are ignored? (APPLAUSE).

This is why he invented, Lula created so many social programs, and made an economic policy that started to change Brazil. So people, I am here renovating in a sincere and transparent way this commitment with you, and give continuity to our work and to our discussions.”

Box 4. Transcript of a part of the speech of the Secretary of the Presidency, Mr. Gilberto Carvalho, in MAB's National Meeting held in São Paulo in 2013. Source: own recording.

Regarding victories and positive outcomes on a national level, MAB has been able to stop the construction of large dams, thanks to a strong anti-dam movement. In MAB's National Meeting in São Paulo in 2013. A leader of the Movement of Peasant Women (Movimento Mulheres Camponesas- MMC) held a speech, to encourage the affected people who were listening, to continue struggling. She spoke about her experience with the Movement that had provoked the annulation of a large dam that would have flooded her home and land:

*“The struggle is worthwhile and I am here to testify this, because I come from a region in the far east of Santa Catarina, where plans were made, more than twenty-five years ago, to construct a large hydroelectric dam. Thanks to the work of the Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB) and the result of its organization of the people, ensured that this dam wasn't built. If it wasn't for people's organization and the work of the MAB, I would have been evicted from my piece of land and everything I have there, a long time ago. I believe I will not have to abandon my property because of this dam, because on last Friday, MAB brought several federal authorities to Itapiranga, including minister Ideli, and we requested the removal of this dam from the federal government's Growth Acceleration Plan. This is the result of the struggle of the people and civil organization and this is why I am here; it's worth to keep on organizing and it's all worth the struggle. We have to stand together to go against those pharaonic constructions because, we, as women, defend life, and when we want to defend life, we need to defend nature to make sure it maintains its social ties, to keep on producing food and water – that must be healthy. We do not want dead water,*

*such as water stored behind the walls of a constructed dam. People – lets stand together – let's fight those immense injustices - because it is worth it!" (R26 MST)*

MAB acknowledges that water and energy are important resources to improve the lives of the Brazilian people but argues that mega-dams are driven by capitalist forces and constructed with the objective to capture investments and to produce energy for different industries. A male MAB activist stated:

*People see the consequences of the Belo Monte dam... No development model was designed for the people, and none of the promises regarding public services have been fulfilled. Nothing of what they promised has happened, and people know that in other places where dams are planned, such as in the Tapajós River, they will confront the same problems. Large dams serve national economic development, but they don't benefit the people. Belo Monte will serve upcoming mining activities, expansion of monocultures, soya production, extraction of raw materials and the construction of waterways. It forms part of a development model where the actors come from the "outside", extract the resources and make the local population pay the price. (R19SM).*

The struggle of MAB aims to obtain public control over water and energy management to assure democratic processes and just distribution of benefits and externalities to guarantee better living conditions for people in Brazil. MAB also demands the government to recognize the people affected by constructing and implementing laws and regulations to protect them, and even to stop the construction of large dams, so that rural communities can continue to function and survive. MAB organizes around a conception of socio-environmental justice, to individuals, groups (such as women) and communities. It is broad, plural and inclusive, and is built on the participation of affected people who are at the heart of the Movement (Schlosberg 2009). Culturally and traditionally, women in Altamira (and in Brazil in general) continue to be circumscribed the domestic sphere, which captivates their possibilities to participate in political spaces and to take decisions that concern them. The cultural and economic structure of society denies women the recognition they need for full participation in social life, as the status order of society have established women as inferior partners in interaction (Fraser 2007). MAB has recognized this and has therefore implemented independent remedies for women's recognition and participation, and made women key actors, with specific claims in the struggle for social and environmental justice in the context of the Belo Monte hydropower dam.



## 5. CONCLUSIONS

In this study I focused on the interlinkages between large dams, women and struggles for social justice within the context of the Belo Monte dam. Empirical data, derived from research conducted in Altamira city by the Xingu River and in Novo Horizonte, an occupied camp in the municipality of Brazil Novo, has been examined by means of inductive content analysis. The discussion of the results was framed within the three dimensions of social and environmental justice theory (distribution, recognition and participation) and conceptualised in a gender perspective, with a focus on women. These combined analytical approaches have served to explain why the research problems under study exist and how they intertwine with social and environmental justice regarding the Belo Monte mega-dam.

The Belo Monte dam is broadly known for its vast social and environmental impacts and lack of concern for local communities, so populations already disadvantaged are worst affected. Empirical data shows that the population who lived in flood-areas of the reservoir were adversely affected by two main distribution processes conducted by the construction authorities. The first one was the resource alienation due to expropriation of property that affected thousands of smallholder families who lived by the river, which was further aggravated by providing insufficient or inadequate compensations to the evicted people. Indemnifications were provided either in cash payments or housing in one of the resettlement areas of Altamira, however, the cash disbursements did not compensate peoples' losses and they were too low to enable people to buy land upstream the reservoir to recover their lives, livelihoods and economies as before the dam. The urban resettlements caused very similar problems as they were all located inland, distant from the river. The second process was a collective abandonment of the uprooted people on behalf of the construction authorities in terms of public services and rehabilitation strategies. Norte Energia ignored their obligations, written in their own Basic Environmental Plan (PBA) to implement public policies that should facilitate basic service infrastructure and foster local development, such as: water and sanitation; health units; hospitals; schools; public transport; electricity; education and safety measures for the population. Many of these problems were aggravated by a sudden population growth of 30,000 people, mostly male construction workers, who settled in Altamira before the resettlement plan was activated, causing price inflation of living costs, social disorder and increased violence, sexual abuse and exploitation against women. These impacts obliged many people to leave Altamira, and some of them occupied land in other municipalities, such as in Novo Horizonte, and struggled to gain landownership over it.

In light of my first research question *how do affected women, public servants and activists, experience the transformations caused by the Belo Monte dam and their effects on women?*, the findings and analysis show that women were deeply burdened by the above mentioned dispossession and maldistribution practises. These grievances were aggravated by a deep-rooted gender division in most social spheres that locate women in an unequal *cultural, economic* and *political* position, which also made it difficult for women to adapt, overcome and accept the new life imposed upon them. *Culturally*, women are subject to traditional gender norms where they are discriminated in comparison to the freedoms and possibilities men have in the private and public domain. Women are educated into the role of caregiver, responsible for the well-being and maintenance of the family and home. Institutionalised discrimination reduces women's ability to adapt to big changes, as their day-to day life is largely built around their homes, family and social network. Breaking out this pattern results very difficult. The subordinated position of women also exposes women to domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse, and the social confusion and lack of prevention and protection measures aggravated their situation. *Economically*, women remain in a reproductive role, linked to their families and local community, taking care of their children, work at home and in smallholder agricultural activities (in rural areas of resettlement), which gives women little economic autonomy and limited opportunities to obtain paid work, resulting in gender-specific distributive injustice (Fraser 1999). Women were also discriminated compared to men in terms of the indemnifications for expropriated land. Justice as *recognition of difference* arises from the need to challenge traditional norms and processes that powers inadequate or insufficient distribution of economic assets and disregards the voices of local people, including those of women, in policymaking. In the case of Belo Mote project, the lack of recognition allowed the distant construction authorities to uphold a privileged situation over the oppressed local population, taking decisions according to their own viewpoint without sufficiently considering local realities, group differences or their requests. Although the majority of people in areas of impact were suffering from inadequate compensations, breach of community bonds, lack of public policies and higher rates of sexual violence and abuse, women suffered these consequences more severely and intensely because the construction authorities had not done anything to avoid or mitigate gendered impacts. Social justice, then, requires the recognition of the realities of local societies and of groups within them, such as women, according to their differences, social status and needs in order to combat dispossession, maldistribution, oppression and abuse. Justice is a human need that has to do with equal opportunity for people and also about recognizing their rights and freedoms.

This doesn't happen on its own, and accordingly, dam-affected women in Altamira (and Brazil) were struggling to obtain these rights.

Women's struggle for political involvement and *participation* is the third pillar of social and environmental justice that relates to the second research question of this study: *how do women, linked to social movements, react to the effects of the Belo Monte dam, and what are the results of their struggle?* The empirical data showed that affected women in Altamira and Brazil Novo had looked for social movements (some through community grassroots groups) because they felt that these were the only places they could find support to obtain indemnification and public services on a local level, and for change in terms of justice for dam-affected people in a national political project. Participation in social movements also encouraged the most active women to break with the rigid division of roles and to start occupying space in the political field to create and adopt new ways of obtaining a dialogue with the construction authorities. Social and environmental movements, however, are not free from producing gender inequalities themselves, as they are not committed to promoting women's rights and changing male-dominated power relations, and the issue of women's rights is often not prioritized. The Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB) had taken steps to advance their approach towards women's participation and leadership both within the movement and external-facing activism by creating platforms and agendas by and for affected women. Locally, they participated in grassroots-groups that they linked with their national network, enabling women to play a central role in preparing the political and legal demands on behalf of affected people that they presented to the government. This form of participation enhances women's claims for recognition in cultural, as well as in political spheres, supporting women to contest dominant discourses about dams and development, and other mechanisms of power and justice on their own premises.

The in-depth combined analysis of particular individuals, mostly women, affected by the Belo Monte dam and the collective action canalized through MAB and other social movements, constitutes a novel methodological framework to address the two research questions and objectives of the study. This approach allowed to contribute to the understanding about women in the struggle for social and environmental justice in the context of the Belo Monte dam. In this regard, it is important to understand the building blocks of justice and crucially, women's position within its economic (redistribution), cultural and political dimensions (recognition and participation), which are all intertwined in socio-environmental conflicts. Changing mind-sets and distribution procedures of the construction authorities, involves



political action, negotiation and confrontation between the conflicting parties. This may be about the local allocation of material or economic goods or about the construction of national rules, policies and laws that make a project such as Belo Monte dam possible (or not). In this respect, it also matters who has power, whose interests are prioritized and on whose criteria decisions are taken and their implications for those they affect (Zwarteveen & Boelens 2014).

Recognizing women by paying attention to their lives, voices and actions may provide information about the less apparent drivers of social and environmental change. Opening up for women's participation helps building gender-just movements and also to incorporate women's claims in political strategies associated with socio-environmental movements that put the well-being of women (and people) at the centre of their demands. Only by integrating notions of redistribution, recognition and participation in large-dam projects such as the Belo Monte, the demands of justice-for-all can be met (Fraser 2007) .

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## APPENDICE

### Appendix 1. List of interviews

CODE (reference in text)	Interviewee's title and group	State of compensation	Gender (M/ F)	Individual Group Talk	Place	Month and Year
<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Affected Person from:</b>					
R1AP	Altamira	Displaced/ resettled	F	Individual	Resettlement	July 2015/ October 2013
R2AP	Riverside dweller upstream BM	Displaced/ resettled	F	Individual	Xingú Vivo office, Altamira	July 2015
R3AP	Altamira	Displaced/ compensated	F	Individual	University of Pará, Altamira	July 2015
R4AP	Trans Amazonian Highway	Indirectly affected	F	Individual	Transamazonian Highway, demonstration	July 2015
R5AP	Altamira	Compensation conflict	F	Individual	Xingú Vivo Altamira	July 2015
R6AP	Indigenous village and Altamira	Not compensated	F	Individual	Home in Altamira	July 2015
R7AP	Brazil Novo	Land occupant	M	Individual	SãoPaulo	October 2013
R8AP	Brazil Novo	Land occupant	F	Individual	Brazil Novo	July 2015/ October 2013
R9AP	Brazil Novo	Land occupant	M	Individual	Brazil Novo	July 2015
R10AP	Riverside dweller	Displaced/ resettled	F	Individual	Xingú Vivo Altamira	July 2015
R11AP	Riverside dweller	Displaced/ resettled	F	Individual	Xingú Vivo Altamira	July 2015
<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Professors/ researchers</b>					
R12 Prof	University of Pará, Altamira		M	Individual	University of Pará, Altamira	July 2015/ October 2013
R13 Prof	University of Pará, Altamira		F	Individual	University of Pará, Altamira	July 2015
<b>Respondent</b>	<b>State and government actors</b>					
R14MPF	Ministério Público Federal Public Attorney's Office		F	Individual		July 2015

R15MPE	Ministério Público Estatal		M	Individual		July 2015
R16MPE	Ministério Público Estatal		F	Individual		July 2015
R17FUNAI	FUNAI		F	Individual	FUNAI office, Altamira	July 2015
<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Social Movements/ Civil Society/ Church</b>					
R18SM	Movement of Dam Affected Peoples		F	Individual	Hotel in Altamira/ MAB office in Itaituba	July 2015/ October 2013
R19SM	Movement of Dam Affected Peoples		M	Individual	MAB National Meeting in São Paulo/ MAB office in Itaituba	July 2015/ October 2013
R20 Priest	Movement of Dam Affected Peoples		M	Individual	Brazil Novo	July 2015
R21SM	MMTACC Movimento de Mulheres Trabalhadoras de Altamira Campo e Cidade		F	Individual	Office of the Movement	July 2015
R22SM	Movimento Xingú Vivo para Sempre		F	Individual	Xingú Vivo office, Altamira	July 2015
R23SM	Movimento Xingú Vivo para Sempre		F	Individual	Xingú Vivo office, Altamira	July 2015
R24SM	Movimento de Mulheres Negras de Altamira		F	Individual	Xingú Vivo office, Altamira/ University of Pará, Altamira	July 2015/ October 2013
R25SM	Movimento Xingú Vivo para Sempre		F	Individual	Xingú Vivo office, Altamira	July 2015
	<b>Speakers at Meetings</b>					
R26 MST	Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas do Brasil - MMC		M	Talk	MAB National Meeting in São Paulo	October 2013
R27 GOV	Secretary of the President		F	Talk and individual	MAB National Meeting in São Paulo	October 2013



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