Int Environ Agreements (2015) 15:61–77
DOI 10.1007/s10784-014-9268-z

ORIGINAL PAPER

Passive revolution in the green economy: activism and the Belo Monte dam

Eve Bratman

Accepted: 20 October 2014 / Published online: 11 November 2014

Abstract The paper offers an analysis of the historical, material, and ideational factors involved in shifting socio-environmental activism dynamics in Brazil, with a focus on the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam project located on the Xingu River in the Brazilian Amazon. Relying on qualitative research at a variety of levels, the paper seeks to answer the question: What does the Belo Monte case portend for our understanding of the capacity of green economy to facilitate a greater environmental sensitivity in a national context? The case study illustrates how green activism has been weakened by a combination of self-interested calculations by activists and strategic maneuvers by the state. Critically for environmental policymaking, the case study reveals how the state and its international allies can use the green economy discourse as a hegemonic tool to isolate opposition, break alliances, and further resource-extraction-oriented economic policies.

Keywords Hydroelectric energy · Belo Monte · Civil society · Hegemony · Green economy

Abbreviations

BNDES	Brazilian Development Bank (Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social)
CCBM	Belo Monte Construction Consortium (Consórcio Constructor Belo Monte)
FVPP	Foundation for Life, Production, and Preservation (Fundação Viver Produzir e Preservar)
MAB	Movement of People Affected by Dams (Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens)
MDTX	Movement for the Development of the Transamazon and Xingu (Movimento pelo Desenvolvimento da Transamazônica e Xingu)
PT	Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores)

E. Bratman (✉)
School of International Service, American University, 4400 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20016, USA
e-mail: Ebratman@gmail.com

IBAMA Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis)
IACHR Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

1 Introduction

This paper explores the conditions and discourses that contributed to the fracturing, weakening, and eventual failure of activist alliances fighting against the construction of the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam project located on the Xingu River in the Brazilian Amazon.

Amazon-focused environmental campaigns have gained substantial national and international attention in the context of global climate change, agriculture, forestry, freshwater, and biodiversity politics. Rural land conflicts and indigenous struggles in Brazil have also involved allied global struggles for human rights and prompted international action (Coelho 1994; Walker et al. 2009; Nepstad et al. 2011). The Brazilian Amazon thus becomes a focal region for sustainable development debates, both domestic and international. The region's "glocalized" sociological and environmental issues involve repercussions that are simultaneously national, regional, and hyper-local (Brown and Purcell 2005).

Through the analysis of historic socio-environmental activism related to the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam, and based on qualitative and ethnographic research, this paper seeks to understand the interaction between anti-dam advocacy and mobilization efforts and state institutional mandates, agendas, and tactics. As contributions to this Journal have established, institutional dynamics are highly relevant in assessing and understanding the potency of civil-society actors and actions at all levels (see e.g., Von Moltke 2002; Fujikura and Nakayama 2003; Centreras 2004; Dambrowski 2010; and Böhmelt and Betzold 2013). Drawing from Neo-Gramscian hegemony theory, this paper further examines the ways in which a state may strategically deploy the discourse of the green economy to marginalize and divide the opposition and to promote the perception of greater legitimacy of the project.

This paper begins with a discussion of the theoretical literature on Gramscian hegemony and subjectivity formation in relation to the green economy. It then presents a brief background in Brazilian conservation and development politics, methods of empirical data collection, and the case study on the Belo Monte dam. The analysis informs readers about the relationship between activism against the Belo Monte project and the influence of the state and elites in material, institutional, and discursive terms.

2 Theoretical background

The Gramscian notion of hegemony offers an important foundation for analyzing the struggles that have characterized the Belo Monte dam project since its conception in the mid-1970s. Gramscian hegemony theory is also particularly useful in understanding how the green economy could be deployed as an ideological tool, leveraged by powerful classes to gain consent (Cox 1983; Bates 1975). The Belo Monte dam case involves a bitter and protracted ideological struggle between the historic bloc (comprising the state and capitalist interests) and formidable anti-dam coalitions (comprising international

environmental and human rights NGOs, Brazilian civil society, church groups, and indigenous tribes).

Neo-Gramscian analysis has roots in Marxism, but Gramsci (1971) and later Neo-Gramscians differ from "economistic" Marxists by identifying three sets of "relations of force" (ibid: 181–184) at work in contemporary politics, rather than reliance solely on material factors. These three sets consist of material, institutional, and discursive forces. According to Neo-Gramscian scholars, the interaction of these three, rather than a narrow economic (material) focus, is necessary to effectively understand the trajectory and outcome of class-based struggles in both national and international politics (Gill 1993; Andrée 2011). The concept of hegemony as formulated by Gramsci is particularly useful because it shows that the historic bloc does not and need not rely on brute force or coercion to manufacture consent. In effect, the combination of material, institutional, and discursive forces creates a more nuanced picture of power relations.

In Gramscian perspective, the process of establishing hegemony comes about through the successful linkage of interests between dominant classes and subordinate classes. To create this affinity, dominant classes will use discourse to conceal contradictions, and a consensus will be created which appears to transcend class divides. This results in the reproduction of the dominant class' position. (Gramsci 1971; Okereke et al., 2009) Identity also becomes inter-subjectively constituted through this process, as a common language is established for morals and social order, which supports and reinforces the prevailing power relations. (Gill 1993; Okereke et al. 2009).

Just as the dominant class relies on promoting this common language and identity to maintain hegemony, Gramsci shows that the main tools for counter-hegemonic struggle are the deconstruction of the universalizing tendency of the capitalist discourse and the attempt to foster proletarian culture, whose native value system counters the cultural hegemony of the bourgeoisie. Gramsci defines these strategic moves by the proletariats and by the dominant class or historic bloc as "the war of position" and "passive revolution," respectively. Hence, a passive revolution refers to "a process of reformist change from above, which entails extensive concessions by relatively weak hegemonic groups, often in the guise of populist or nationalist programmes, in an effort to preserve the essential aspects of social structure" (Levy and Egan 2003: 807). The contrasting concept of war of position suggests how groups challenging hegemonic coalitions from below might succeed over the longer term, avoiding futile frontal assaults by building coordinated coalitions with new allies across multiple bases of power and gaining influence within cultural institutions. Gramscian analysis highlights the importance of the configuration of forces within historical power relations (Levy and Egan 2003). Advocacy coalitions may shift and adapt given different political, social, and economic contexts, but understanding the force of hegemonic ideas and their relationships to civil-society actors and the state is important if research is to create a more nuanced picture of power relations (Cox 1983). Drawing from Gramsci, James Scott notes that although major structural reforms may come from law-breaking and radicalism, peace-seeking inducements, and contestation to provide intellectual or discursive leadership by defining acceptable modes of thought and behavior are increasingly more commonplace in liberal democracies (Scott 2012).

The history of activism over the Belo Monte dam is especially illustrative of a passive revolution as outlined by Gramsci, and it reveals how liberal democracies practice hegemony through discursive and material power. The case study shows how a broad range of discursive, ideational, political, and economic forces marshaled to produce the desired outcome of the historical bloc. The state, in close collaboration with multinational

companies in a series of strategic maneuvers, found ways to incorporate key activist groups into government, materially enticed local and indigenous groups, and presented the dam as an example of a green economy project. To the consternation of many socio-environmental activists, these manipulations weakened local and international civil-society actors and enabled the Brazilian state to retreat from environmental and human rights norms (Bratman 2014). The green economy discourse posits a worldview, wherein economic development is not seen in conflict with environmental priorities or social equity; rather these goals are construed as mutually supportive aims (UNEP 2011; Brand 2012). Yet, it is well established that when sustainable development and the green economy are lived out (regardless of how such terms are technically defined), political frictions and power struggles over social and environmental issues inevitably ensue, especially at local levels (Tsing 2005; Bratman 2014).

3 Background and research context

Since the late 1960s, economic and military elites have eyed Amazonia's potential in facilitating the nation's economic development by exploiting its abundant natural resources. Successive governments have viewed road paving, ranching, export-oriented agriculture, mining, and dam-building projects as crucial to the development of Brazil as a whole. Technocrats and local Amazonian residents alike often champion hydroelectric and road paving infrastructure projects as the epitome of "progress" (Zhouri 2010). Strong Brazilian nationalist sentiment underpinning these views sometimes portrays indigenous groups, socio-environmental activists, and international NGOs as impediments to these modernist development orientations.

Belo Monte is slated to be the world's third largest dam, and it is Brazil's largest infrastructure project, at a cost of at least USD 13 billion.[1] The Brazilian government considers it a keystone project to achieve its energy goals, which entail increasing energy supplies by 5.4 % annually. Belo Monte has involved three decades of social movement contestation and is a very symbolically charged project. Detailed treatments of dam resistance movements in Brazil have been discussed elsewhere (Rothman 2001; McCormick 2007, 2010). Discussion here focuses on the specific history of the Belo Monte project itself in relation to the green economy.

The Belo Monte project, located on Brazil's Xingu River, was first proposed in 1975, and has been controversial from inception. The military dictatorship that ruled the nation from 1964 to 1985 conceived of it as part of a larger strategy for economic growth and national security. In the early 2000s, the perceived demand for energy increased because of blackouts and energy rationing in the country (Salazar 2010). The current Belo Monte project is illustrated in the map below (see Fig. 1).

Construction on the Belo Monte hydroelectric project is slated to be finished by January 2015, with the dam operating at full capacity by 2019 (Brazil 2011). Still, protracted legal battles over the licensing of the dam have caused the project to move forward in fits and starts since its revival in the early 2000s. In 2002, the proposal to build the Belo Monte dam was given new life when then presidential candidate Luiz Inácio da Silva (Lula) included it in the nation's plan for energy infrastructure reforms. The inclusion of Belo

[1] It is forecast to produce around 11,000 GW of energy when it is running at full capacity. The first and second-largest dams, respectively, are the Three Gorges dam in China and the Itaipú dam, jointly run by Brazil and Paraguay.

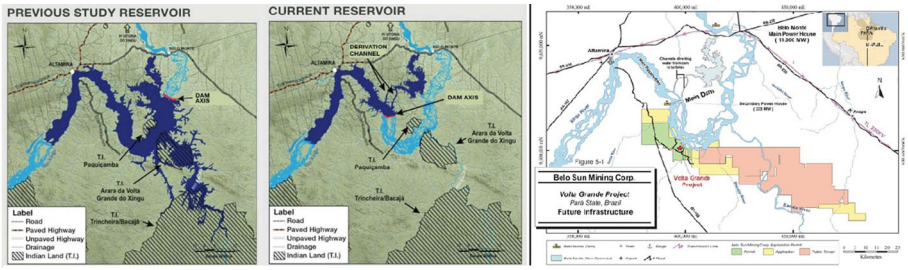

Fig. 1 Feasibility maps of the Belo Monte project. From *left to right* 1980s/1990s Belo Monte project, 2011 Belo Monte project, 2011 Belo Monte project with mining concessions. Map credits: Eletronote, Belo Sun Mining Corp. Images courtesy of International Rivers Network

Monte in the plans marked the first hint of potential fracturing among social movement groups near the Belo Monte dam, many of whom were affiliated with the Worker's Party (PT), and had actively supported Lula's presidential candidacy.

Belo Monte is being almost entirely funded by the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) and government pension funds, and Belo Monte's energy will supply the state-owned power company Eletronorte. The project is being built by a consortium of companies known as the Belo Monte Construction Consortium (CCBM), which includes the giant civil construction firms Andrade Gutierrez, Odebrecht, and Corrêa Camargo, as well as a number of state-owned and state-run companies and pension funds that have hired contractors to complete the work. Local municipal governments and prominent business interests in the Transamazon highway region have formed pro-dam advocacy groups.

The central civil-society actors in the Belo Monte case include a number of local, regional, and national Brazilian nongovernmental organizations, detailed later in this paper. Most notable among the NGOs are the Xingu Alive Forever Movement, the Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB), and the Movement for the Development of the Transamazon and Xingu (MDTX). Local residents directly affected by the dam's construction include those living in the city of Altamira (population approximately 100,000 people, some 19,242 of whom are estimated to be threatened with displacement by the dam), as well as residents in small towns such as Vila Antônio, located along the banks of the river near the construction site. In addition, indigenous groups in the Xingu River basin, many of whom live upstream from the dam itself, have become active in opposing the dam. International advocacy groups, including International Rivers and Amazon Watch, have strongly supported the local anti-dam coalitions. The Catholic Church has been involved as well, sometimes through the personal leadership of the Xingu prelacy's bishop, Dom Erwin Krautler, and other times through its pastoral organizations, most notably the Pastoral Land Commission and the Indigenous Missionary Council. Brazilian researchers, national and international celebrities, and numerous political leaders have become deeply involved in advocacy for or against the dam at various points during its thirty-year history. Protests, court injunctions, and labor strikes have intermittently slowed the Belo Monte licensing process, the Environmental Impact Assessment, and construction activities. In spite of such delays, contestation has largely favored the coalition of interests supporting the dam, which continue to create an impression of inevitability surrounding the dam's construction (Zhouri 2010; Hochstetler 2011).

The paper employs a historical lens to analyze the ways in which activism has been transformed in the Belo Monte case. The current struggles against the dam are a lost "war of position" for socio-environmental activists of the region, furthering the hegemony of the state and the discourse of the green economy. First, I will present the method deployed in the study.

4 Methodology

The research used qualitative and ethnographic research methods. The primary field research took place in June and July 2012, concurrent with the Rio +20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Over thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted, with questions concerning Belo Monte activism, environmentalism, and human rights. The aim was to construct histories of different actors' involvement with the Belo Monte project. The first group of interviews included local residents in the city of Altamira and at Vila Santo Antônio who are affected directly by the dam's construction. These residents, only some of whom identify themselves as affiliated with activist groups, have already lost their homes or likely will be displaced as the dam's construction continues. The interviews snowballed out from these local populations to include indigenous leaders and an array of social movement activists. Participant observation at the Xingu +23 encounter (June 13–16, 2013) further informs the data. Later interviews (conducted during June and July 2013) involved academics, elected officials, technical consultants, and governmental representatives from IBAMA (the federal environmental agency) and the Ministry of Mines and Energy. The relatively brief period during which these groups were interviewed served to establish a clear picture of how relevant actors were both responding and aiming to influence the Rio +20 conference. As the conference formally utilized the green economy discourse internationally, this methodology serves to create a nuanced understanding of the formation of subjective identity.

Additionally informing this work is nearly five years of ethnographic research. Combined with documentary analysis, this research focused on activism and social dynamics involved in the local-level politics of land organizing and conservation area creation in the Transamazon highway region and the Xingu River basin. Extensive ethnographic field research was conducted in this region from 2006 to 2007, and additional ethnographic research in the region took place in June 2010. Subsequent participant observation of Belo Monte-related activism has closely followed transnational activism from Washington DC from 2010 to 2014.

5 Social movement activism against Belo Monte in historical context

Organizing against the Belo Monte project began soon after the project was initially proposed, despite the military dictatorship controlling Brazil at the time. Indigenous groups and riverine peasants organized from the mid-1970s until the end of the 1980s along the Xingu River and in the Transamazon highway region, gaining significant territorial recognition (Schwartzman et al. 2010). A local coalition group of activists, representing more than 20,000 people, was originally known as the Movement for Survival on the Transamazon. It later expanded to encompass "development" as well as the Xingu in its name; it is now called the Movement for the Development on the Transamazon and Xingu

(MDTX).[2] Along with small-scale farmers, participating groups articulated a different view of development from that expressed by the Brazilian government. The movement's distinct vision of pro-poor development and environmentally sustainable agriculture sought to counter the exploitative developmental models proffered by the military regime and local elites. The groups emphasized environmental conservation by protecting small-scale agriculturalists over interests of cattle ranchers, loggers, and illegal land claimants as a viable development alternative in the region (Schwartzman et al. 2010; Toni 2006). The Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB), formally established in 1991, voiced a similar alternative development and anti-neoliberal view. MAB articulated a strong discourse against hydroelectric dam projects and in defense of alternative energy sources and people's rights on a national level, although they were not active in the Xingu River basin until 2009.

Despite opposing a government led by military elites committed to the project, initial opposition to the Belo Monte project was formidable. A 1989 gathering, the "First Encounter of the Xingu," marked the culmination of the early organizing against the Belo Monte project, then known as the Kararaô, and involved numerous Xingu River dams and a much larger flooded reservoir area. The event included a historically large indigenous presence and substantial transnational activist support (Carvalho 2006). This First Encounter of the Xingu effectively stopped the project and constituted a major victory for socio-environmental activists. Soon after the gathering, the World Bank withdrew its financing on the basis of many socio-environmental concerns. Opposition by social movement activists remained strong for another 15 years, in spite of project revisions which lessened its impact. Still, from 1993 on, energy companies and the Brazilian government continued to analyze the viability of constructing dams on the Xingu River. In subsequent modifications to the dam, Belo Monte would involve less socio-environmental impact, constructing only one major dam instead of six and taking new form as a run-of-river dam[3] (Moya et al. 2007).

A new viability study of a revised Belo Monte proposal was completed in 2002, although it did not include an environmental assessment. Concurrent with the governmental studies, the MDTX produced a study that criticized the Belo Monte project. Their "SOS Xingu" call served as the basis of a 2002 mobilization that brought together around 2,000 people in opposition to the dam (MDTX 2001; Schwartzman et al. 2010). The MDTX remained active in opposition to the project for the next several years in conjunction with other local and international groups, including the Catholic Church, the women's movement in Altamira, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Environmental Defense Fund. The groups were further united and spurred by the assassinations of two social movement leaders in 2001 and 2002. One of them, Ademir Federicci, was outspoken in his criticism of the Belo Monte project. In February 2005, the assassination of Sister Dorothy Stang[4] marked another unifying moment for social movement activists. The government

[2] The MDTX worked largely through a formal NGO known as the Foundation for Life, Production, and Preservation (FVPP).

[3] Run-of-river dams typically involve a smaller reservoir than storage dams, and their electricity generation is proportional to the flow of the river.

[4] Sister Dorothy Stang was an American-born nun who was 73 years old when she was killed by hired gunmen because of her activism for land reform and environmental protection in the region. Her assassination made international news. The government's creation of the Xingu conservation areas, which occurred only a week after her death, was widely recognized as a gesture aimed at quelling outcry over the lawlessness in the region. Death threats against Dom Erwin Krautler, the Bishop of the Xingu prelacy, continue, so that he wears a bullet-proof vest under his vestments while leading mass and has 24-h security guards.

created a huge Xingu River conservation area in direct response to the assassination, marking a substantial victory for environmental conservation priorities in the region and temporarily highlighting a regional development model based on small-scale farming and sustainable extraction of forest resources (Bratman 2011; Schwartzman et al. 2010).

Simultaneously, however, a coalition of energy and construction companies, as well as local mayors, had formed, supporting the federal government's plan to construct the dam (Hochstetler 2011). Organized by these local political and business interests, a march in favor of the dam by several thousand people took place in February 2006 in Altamira. Dam supporters' signs read, among other things, "good for the region, bringing development for all of Brazil." Concurrently, environmental and anthropological studies concerning proposed licensing of the project restarted. Brazil's Congress had passed a decree in 2005 that gave the executive branch permission to move forward with the project after viability studies were completed (Congresso Nacional 2005; Moya et al. 2007; Jornal Fatos Regionais 2006). It also passed a bill promising that Belo Monte would be the only dam constructed on the Xingu River (Fearnside 2006).

Sensing the new momentum from the state and its expanding array of allies, the indigenous groups from the Xingu River basin organized an event known as the second "Encounter of the Xingu" in 2008, aiming to reignite the opposition. While this meeting was well attended and included transnational support, little national or international attention was given to the event. In a gesture that triggered international outcry against the dam in 1989, a young Kayapó woman had symbolically threatened an electric company official with her machete. Faced with a similar confrontation in 2008, when an official was actually cut, activists and the media reacted with more embarrassment than sympathy.

In a move that reflected the change in the political dynamics soon after this Second Encounter, the pro-dam groups organized an event at which President Lula came to speak. This move made apparent that an important gulf had developed within the once-close circle of activists, as longtime friends and collaborators found themselves on opposite sides of a protest march, shouting at each other, before President Lula's speech. Since construction began in early 2011, work has frequently halted due to labor disputes and occupations of the site by indigenous protesters (Fig. 2).

In addition to numerous domestic legal challenges to the project, prominent resignations have also figured significantly in the history of activism against the Belo Monte project. The IBAMA head, Abelardo Bayma Azevedo, resigned in January 2011, allegedly overpressures he had faced to grant a full environmental license for the construction of the dam (Jampolsky 2012; Hurwitz 2011).[5] In April 2011, Brazil was summoned to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). The commission demanded suspension of construction of the dam based on violations of the free, prior, and informed consent stipulations that are part of the human rights safeguards for such projects. The Brazilian government's response was strongly reactive. President Dilma Rouseff criticized the decision, suspended the nation's payment of $800,000 to the Organization of American States, and temporarily withdrew its ambassador (Soltis 2011).

Aside from such legal objections, however, the material power of the state is evident in the logistics of the project's continuation. The 2010 construction license for the dam was granted along with two long lists of preconditions, which purportedly needed to be met before the government would grant installation licenses. There were forty points on the list of environmental conditions, as well as 38 indigenous conditions that needed to be met

[5] His predecessor, Roberto Messias Franco, also left the position in 2010 over differences of opinion surrounding the Belo Monte dam.

Fig. 2 *Top* Pro-dam protestors gather in the shade of a Belo Monte billboard, June 2006 (Credit: Eve Bratman); *bottom* anti-dam protestors at the First Encounter of the Xingu, February 1989 (Credit: Encontro de Altamira, 1989. © Murilo Santos/ISA)

(Parecer Técnico FUNAI 2009).[6] Construction continues despite very little progress in meeting the environmental or the indigenous conditions in the construction licenses, resulting in renewed court requests to halt the project (Ascom MPF 2012). The licensing keeps the project moving forward despite the legal concerns.

[6] Adding such conditions in environmental licensing procedures is a relatively new legal development. Legal precedents for establishing pre-conditions began in 2003, and their use continuously expanded, so that dam construction projects could remain on fast-paced timetables. In the Belo Monte case many of these pre-conditions remain unmet, although later licenses, such as those for installation, have been granted.

6 Fracture and weakening of anti-dam coalition: analysis of state strategies

Political opportunity structures created conditions where once-unified activist alliances began to diverge, as groups were presented with support of other projects and the promises of certain political benefits. A broad network of local, national, and international socio-environmental groups had successfully advocated for the riverine peasants of the Xingu River basin as they faced illegal land claiming and deforestation from 1995 to 2005. Once the massive biodiversity corridor of conservation areas in the Xingu River basin was created in 2006, however, these groups began to splinter in the shadow of the dilution of their common cause. Funding opportunities to further improve conditions for riverine peasants along the Xingu could be achieved through joining in the council to discuss the Belo Monte dam regional benefits package, but not through hard line opposition stances rejecting the project.

The PT's consolidation of power at the federal and state levels began to cause tensions between local social movement activists who had had very strong working alliances. Activists with longstanding affiliations with the PT benefitted when the party assumed control of the Brazilian presidency in 2003, and more so when the PT won the Pará state governorship in 2007. With these political shifts, certain nongovernmental groups, especially those with historically close ties to the PT, gained new political opportunities and project funding. Specifically, the MDTX, under its project-oriented nongovernmental organizational arm known as the Foundation for Life, Production, and Preservation (FVPP), took on an increasingly important role as a gap-filler in the face of governmental voids in the region (Toni 2006). This led to two notable consequences. First, as the scale of the organization's projects grew, it informally became an operational arm of governmental agencies and other donors (Toni 2006). Understandably, organizations working outside such powerful institutional ties experienced decline of their interests and influence. Second, wedge issues such as the paving of the Transamazon highway caused rifts among longtime allies over both whether to and how to oppose the Belo Monte project, thereby further fragmenting the once-strong alliances of social movements in the region (Bratman 2014).

Research conducted for this article revealed that the extension of state influence into civil-society organizations took place over time as the PT's political power grew. Many leaders of the FVPP as well as the MAB had strong historic ties with the Catholic Church's grassroots organizing initiatives and also with the PT. The FVPP changed its stance to "not opposed" to the dam in 2008, making the decision based on a calculation that backing the Belo Monte project was important to the organization's ability to maintain funding for other initiatives and political strength in the region. Similarly, MAB offered national-level support to the PT and to presidential candidate Dilma Rouseff. This was perceived locally as acquiescent to the Belo Monte project, since Rouseff had consistently advocated for Belo Monte as Minister of Mines and Energy. While in theory, MAB is against the energy model that such projects represent, the group's actions in Altamira since 2009 concentrated not on blocking the project but rather on organizing the urban residents in Altamira who ultimately will be displaced by the project.

A Gramscian framework is relevant to understanding the importance and impact of these alliances between the state and the most powerful local civil-society groups. Gramsci posits that the civil society has a dual existence (Levy and Newell 2005). It functions both as an arena for counter-hegemonic struggles and, in contrast, as an extension of the state. In capturing key voices within the civil society and using such voices to further the interests of the dominant class, ideological hegemony can be exerted in both subtle and pervasive

ways. James Scott makes the point slightly differently, noting that policy makers negotiate with "institutions of translation" premised on the idea that they have the allegiances of certain constituencies, but also that such institutions function in ways that are "parasitic on the spontaneous defiance of those whose interests they presume to represent" (Scott 2012: 20).

Social movement rifts also occurred as the groups began engaging with the government and the dam-building consortium to negotiate over social benefit projects and funding. The governmental promise to pave the Transamazon highway as part of the dam's construction helped create a wedge between longtime activists in the region. Remaining staunchly opposed to Belo Monte, one of the central MDTX and Altamira-based women's movement leaders, Antônia Melo, founded a new organization called the Xingu Alive Forever Movement. With the founding of the organization, people who had shared office space and friendships moved into separate offices and moved into tenser relationships. The Catholic Church, too, took a hard line stance against MAB's more conciliatory position. Most notably, Bishop Dom Erwin Krautler publicly questioned MAB's involvement as concessionary toward the dam builders, based on the idea that MAB's *raison d'etre* was to help dam-affected people. Friction between the hard line organizations and those willing to negotiate over different elements of the USD 1.5 billion benefits package coming to the region from the dam-building consortium fractured the activist dynamics in the region.

7 The hegemonic discourse of green economy

In addition to the human, economic, and ecological implications of the Belo Monte project, at stake are contrasting symbolic visions of the best development course for Brazil. Gramscian analysis emphasizes the importance of discourses that conceal contradictions and the establishment of values that transcend class division as central to the maintenance of hegemony. In the Belo Monte case, such discursive and ideational shifts take place on a distinctively symbolic level, incorporating debate over the legitimacy of Brazilian democracy and the values underlying the green economy. Former President Lula remarked of Belo Monte: "What is happening today is the end of a period in which people had a fear of governing; the end of a period in which people were afraid of debate …. we are making possible something that for 30 years has appeared impossible" (da Silva 2010b). The political justifications for the dam hinge upon governmental assertions of the strength of Brazilian democracy.

Nationalistic discourse has also compounded with the discourse on the strength of Brazilian democracy to strengthen the hegemonic assertion of discursive power. In the face of the 2011 decision in which the IACHR found that free, prior, and informed consent had been violated, the Brazilian foreign minister responded that the finding was "premature and unjustified," and another government official called the request "absurd" and a "threat to Brazilian sovereignty" (Barrionuevo 2011; Hayman 2011). Many observers contend that the government will move forward on the Belo Monte project regardless of protests or legal complaints (Barrionuevo 2011). When international celebrities and foreign activists have articulated critiques of the project, they have been criticized for imposing their views on Brazilian sovereign affairs. Edson Lobão, head of the Ministry of Mines and Energy, went so far as to call people against the building of dams in the Amazon "demonic forces" (Elizondo 2009). This view is indicative of a transition from reliance on coercive material tactics into emphasis on discursive and intellectual leadership. The effect of this is to undermine the formation of a strong oppositional discourse by articulating a vision of civil

society that conforms to the more widely held identity of a free and democratic Brazilian society.

Discourse portraying the Belo Monte project as emblematic of the green economy shows how the once-unified activist message of the dam as devastating environmentally became undermined and exemplifies how a Gramscian passive revolution took place within Brazil. Government-sponsored advertisements aired in conjunction with the Rio +20 conference in June 2012 portrayed the Belo Monte dam as a "clean energy" initiative that would not flood out any indigenous communities. Technically, these are true assertions; the project would deplete water levels, rather than displacing the indigenous communities through flooding. Still, the ecological and human rights critiques against the project have been undermined by such rhetoric.[7] Additionally, certain court arguments have been based on the logic that delaying Belo Monte will interfere with the country's energy supply, leading to more polluting and costly energy production in the country. Based on this purportedly green rationale, legal scholar Bibiana Graeff notes that court rulings have promoted "a more questionable form of economic growth, rather than true sustainable development." (2012: 270)

A visit by President Lula to Altamira in June 2010 revealed a discursive strategy to delegitimize those opposing the project. His speech characterized anti-dam activists as "a half-dozen well-intentioned young people" who essentially were irrational and naïve:

> When I was their age, I would go to Paraná to protest against the construction of the Itaipu dam…. The opposition – like these kids – for lack of information, used to say that an earthquake would happen, say that the Itaipu reservoir would cause an earthquake in the Itaipu region…. It's because of these constructed fantasies that we should not be afraid of debating. It's because of these constructed fantasies that we need to say: The state of Pará and the Xingu region cannot give up Belo Monte, there's no way to go without it (da Silva 2010a).

The quote above clearly contrasts "constructed fantasies" of opposition groups with the successful track record of the government. Omitting mention of the significant problems with most other large dams in the Amazon region, the Itaipu dam (located at the Brazilian border with Paraguay) is upheld as a comparable model. Still, the dam-building coalition's discourses defy economic calculations; as one of the engineers involved in the project has said, "God only makes a place like Belo Monte once in a while. This place was made for a dam." (quoted in Fearnside 2006, p. 4)

As the project moved forward, one activist observed: "…Right now, as we say, the society is anesthetized to the problem. The fact is that Belo Monte is getting constructed, and no matter how many legal processes we enter, the justice system ignores them, or judges reverse the decisions that were made" (interview with author, June 2012). Moreover, the local anti-dam opposition is minimized by the government as a few Amazonian residents and native people impeding development for millions of Brazilians. Local growth in the city of Altamira has skyrocketed with construction jobs and real estate speculation. While estimates are that around 20,000 people would be displaced by the dam, the project would deliver energy to 23 million homes (Birns and Soltis 2011).

[7] The impacts of the dam do involve greenhouse gas emissions and forest and biodiversity losses. The project will displace nearly 40,000 people, although most are urban residents and non-indigenous riverine peasants, and the dam will harm indigenous livelihoods by reducing the water supplies for indigenous communities, which currently rely on fishing and river-based transportation.

Discourses of green economy that favor hydroelectric projects, even large-scale ones, as part of clean energy strategies have been increasingly embraced at the international level. The World Commission on Dams' seminal report in 2000 noted a hope to "change the tenor of the debate [on large dams] away from lack of trust and destructive confrontation and toward cooperation, shared goals, and more equitable outcomes" (World Commission on Dams 2000, p. 310). Likewise, the World Bank has significantly increased its funding for dam construction around the world, as it now considers hydroelectric energy as an important part of the clean energy matrix (Goldman 2001). These cautious embraces of hydroelectric dams as forms of clean energy on a global level have functioned to further legitimize the Belo Monte project as having strong "green" credentials, despite the objections of activists on the grounds of carbon dioxide emissions, loss of forests and biodiversity, and negative social ramifications (Mehta 2001). More broadly, Brazil remains discursively positioned as a global leader in renewable forms of energy, even though wind and solar projects comprise only 3.4 % of the nation's energy matrix and are anticipated to climb to 3.7 % of the nation's energy composition by 2020. As described here, the leveraging of discourses about democracy, the questionable legitimacy of activists, and green energy are all designed to hide differences and undermine opposition, thereby functioning to support and further entrench relations of hegemony within the society.

8 Material inducements and identity construction

The Belo Monte construction has meant a complex series of identity-based articulations for many of the indigenous groups living in the region. Some indigenous groups living nearby in the Xingu basin had already, in fact, agreed to the project, usually in exchange for promises of better houses, boats, food, and infrastructure improvements in their villages. Others, however, remained opposed; an indigenous occupation led by the Xikrin tribe and involving nine other indigenous groups at the Belo Monte construction site from June 22 to July 12, 2012 (shortly after the Rio +20 Earth Summit) effectively stopped all work on the project for 3 weeks. The occupation articulated a number of demands on behalf of the communities (Perkins 2012), but the collective statement by men in the Tirncheira-Bacajá indigenous territory, voiced opposition to the project more broadly:

> …Stop this and let the river run so that our children can drink and bathe in its waters. If they build this dam the river will become ruined, its waters will no longer be good. The river will be dry; how will we be able to navigate and travel?…. Our studies were poorly completed and now you speak of a dam…. We do not like this. We want this Belo Monte dam to stop once and for all! (Amazon Watch 2012a).

The protesting indigenous groups were divided into smaller groups to negotiate, and the Xinkrin ultimately decided to end their occupation and agree to terms, with the rest of the groups following suit. A press statement from the advocacy group Amazon Watch noted, "Norte Energia offered each community a package of "trinkets" such as TVs, boats, cameras, and computers while refusing to commit to a timetable for meeting the legally required social and environmental conditions" (Amazon Watch 2012b). In several villages near the Belo Monte project, indigenous leaders disagreed over the question of supporting the dam. At times, such rifts were so severe that high-profile indigenous activists could not, in fact, speak on behalf of their whole group (interviews with author, July 2012). While some anti-dam activists presented themselves as unified voices of the indigenous peoples of the Xingu against the dam, here, they appear in fact to be strategically positioned

articulations of opposition by certain groups and particular leaders, whose later conciliatory stances reveal their own struggle to make the best of what appears to be a losing battle.

Another contestation over activist identities is illustrated by a protest at the dam site during the Rio +20 conference. A diverse assemblage of around 300 protesters, including local activists, indigenous groups, students groups, São Paulo-based Occupy movement activists, Catholic Church leaders, members of the Rainbow Family, and a handful of researchers and international NGO leaders came together. The primary indigenous group represented there, however, was from the Munduruku tribe, which is not located on the Xingu but rather on the neighboring Tapajós River, which is slated to receive a dam in the future. While the event began with a highly symbolic act of nonviolent resistance, with protestors making a human banner spelling *Pare Belo Monte* (stop Belo Monte) on a construction site in the middle of the river, the next day it devolved into chaotic acts of property destruction. The Munduruku tribe looted the Belo Monte construction site office, breaking computers, smashing windows, and burning documents there. Indigenous groups have legal protections from prosecution under Brazilian law, so agents of the state turned their gaze onto local activists. Eleven activists (including a priest, a nun, and a documentary filmmaker), none of whom actually participated in the looting, were charged with criminal offenses (G1 Pará 2012).

The Brazilian media and the judicial system have also been active in fomenting the impression that social movement groups, including anti-dam activists, are criminal (Pereira da Silva and Rothman 2011). This example illustrates how the state frames anti-dam activists as illegitimate and makes them into criminal subjects. In contrast, many activists articulate a self-perception, wherein they democratically and nonviolently engage with the state, and the Belo Monte project itself is an illegal "invasion." Still, the battle over whose legitimacy is at stake has largely been lost, both discursively and materially.

In the face of the dam's approval by the highest levels of Brazilian government, advocacy, and mobilization efforts in opposition to the dam are increasingly fractured and based on gaining incremental benefits rather than making claims of justice violations. Those maintaining hard line opposition stances against the dam are increasingly isolated. Meanwhile, groups willing to negotiate with the construction company about benefits are able to make significant political gains and achieve public benefits through local projects.

9 Conclusion

As the Brazilian state has voiced a strong commitment to moving forward with the Belo Monte project, those resisting the project are left in increasingly isolated and more radicalized positions. The discourse about democracy's vibrancy in Brazil and invocation of the green economy as a means of promoting economic growth under a legitimating discourse of "clean energy" have appealed to significant elements of the Brazilian population, including some activists. Further, the discourses aiming to discredit anti-dam activists as well as material factors limited the effectiveness and broader resonance of the anti-dam opposition. This case study shows that especially within the discourse of the green economy, oppositional frameworks are difficult to delineate, particularly in the context of Brazil's liberal democracy and the unquestioned energy demands and growth imperatives assumed within the national agenda.

The era of green economy reveals a new constellation of hegemonic control in the interaction between the state and civil society. While Brazil's commitment to sustainable

development and the green economy theoretically would entail adherence to strong principles of equity, participation, and environmental valuation, the Belo Monte case looks different. Civil society stood in effective united opposition to the project during the era when sustainable development was the overriding ideology of governing practice; but in the age of the green economy, opposition groups are left increasingly politically isolated, fragmented, and marginalized in their tactics of voicing dissent.

The case also reveals how the state makes some motions toward participation and adherence to environmental norms, but such gestures are disingenuous at best. When considered in light of the other political and economic forces at stake, they make the Belo Monte project appear to have been a foregone conclusion since the PT embraced it as a project. Particularly, in light of liberal democratic institutions and the ability to leverage independent financing of infrastructure projects, activists are less capable of organizing in effective transnational networks to influence state policies than in earlier periods.

Some scholars have noted that the sustainable development and the environmental justice frameworks have functioned in mutually supportive relationships, supplementing each other by creating broad bases of support and influence (Agyeman et al. 2002). The evidence presented here suggests that consolidations of state control, rather than the values of participation and environmental justice, may characterize new green economy paradigm.

If the Belo Monte case is indeed emblematic for Brazil and other nations, it should serve as a warning: The green economy may prove to be a thin green veneer over the business-as-usual of growth-oriented economic priorities. Closely examined in its local manifestations, the green economy is shown to involve assertions of state control and economic growth priorities which stretch into policies that undermine, resist, and subvert the existing environmental and participatory norms of the state itself.

Acknowledgments I am grateful to The School of International Service at American University for their generous support of this research.

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