



Degradation of Work and Hydro-Electric Power Generation in Amazonia

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Introduction: During the last two decades, Brazil has undergone intense political and economic upheaval due to its late intervention in the globalization of capital resulting from neoliberalism and, in the last decade, on account of the development of a new economic model based on New Developmentalism. In this context, the national electricity sector has undergone profound transformations, such as privatization and other forms of Private Public Partnership (PPP). The Madeira Hydroelectric Complex, located in the state of Rondônia, in the Amazon region, is participating in this type of PPP to build two large hydro-electric power plants (HPP) – Jirau and Santo Antonio – regarded as models in the reconstruction of the country's infrastructure projects and the induction of Amazonia as a new national frontier of hydropower. The objective of our research is based in this context, focusing on the Jirau HPP in the state of Rondônia. **Methodology and development:** This research draws on theoretical methodology concerning spatiality of territory and conflicts in order to analyze degradation of work in the Jirau HPP. This movement is captured through the lens of critical geography committed to the liberation of the people who work and are subordinated to the dictates of capital. Consequently, qualitative research and field work are central to the investigative process. From this we will be able to understand the degradation of work and the specifics of the conditions of migrant workers who move throughout the country but particularly in the north and north-eastern states. Situations such as: human trafficking and slave labour; over-exploitation and intensification of the process of work, in order to meet production targets pre-set by the consortium, extending working hours into overtime; outsourcing and other insecure practices; dreadful housing conditions putting the health and lives of workers at risk. Therefore, in the face of the disastrous scenario of the Amazonian HPPs being built, Belo Monte among others, the workers have been showing resistance and fighting against the processes degrading their work. Workers rioted at the Jirau HPP in 2011 and 2012, with paralyzing strikes in 2013. **Final thoughts:** In the context of Brazilian New Developmentalism, state action, and national and international capital on a grand scale, results in over-exploitation and degradation at work. These mechanisms range from the combined elements of Fordism and Toyota-ism to the establishment of strategies for the primitive accumulation of capital, to subjugate and gain a surplus from the national territory, with effects on the merchandizing of the Brazilian Amazon. These result in the expropriation of traditional populations and peasant workers from their traditional living areas.

Key words: Work, conflict, territory, Amazonia, Jirau HPP, degradation.