

## The Construction of Reality and the De-Construction of Barriers in *Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*

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### Abstract

Ecological documentaries (eco-docs) can serve as a powerful tool to inspire global environmental action. Brazilian filmmaker and activist Andre D'Elia uses his eco-doc *Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*, released in 2012, to fight the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam being constructed on the Xingu River in the eastern part of the Brazilian Amazon. This article examines how D'Elia highlights the multifaceted effects of the dam, from deforestation to prostitution to frame Belo Monte as an environmental, economic, and social issue in order to forge a middle ground upon which multiple interest groups can unite. I first discuss how filmmakers can use film to construct realities that break down barriers to action. Second, I explore D'Elia's framing of the Belo Monte against Robert and Thanos' four criteria for global investment in a cause to show how modern activists can use film to help generate transnational action. The criteria are the type of developer, the amount of political and legal space protesters have to maneuver, the economic situation of the country, and the ways in which citizens at home and abroad respond to the struggle. Though watching a film does not necessarily generate action, it does provide viewers with a frame, crafted by the filmmaker, to understand the issue. The frame is crucial because the discursive language it fosters shapes the viewer's understanding and therefore actions taken in relation to the issue.

### Introduction

*A wide-angle shot captures the gentle "Xingu River - In the Heart of the Amazon" as indicated by a small subtitle in the upper left corner. It is early morning and the sun gives off a faint pink glimmer behind painted clouds. A slow tune plays, accompanied by the sounds of birds and insects, capturing the serenity of the scene. Cut to a wide-angle, time-lapse of the river rolling lazily in comparison to speedy clouds above. As the camera tracks out to a larger shot, it reveals the colorful town of "Altamira-Pará-Brazil," as indicated by a subtitle, resting on the river's banks. The next shots cut from a time-lapse of sunset on the Xingu to one of sunrise with small bodies and boats quickly coming and going from the quiet water (fig. 1, p. 39).*

*There is a sharp cut away from poet Andre Costa Nunes' musings about the Xingu to a medium shot filled with echoing bulldozers, cranes, and other heavy machinery leveling a lush forest. The shot backs out to a wide-angle to include eight machines in the foreground and countless others in the middle ground and background moving laboriously over the uneven ground, dominating it with its weight. Then the camera cuts to a medium-long shot of a*

*booming explosion that sends piles of dirt and smoke into the air against the background of the untouched forest (fig. 2, p. 39).*

This montage of the Xingu River from *Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*, by Brazilian filmmaker and activist André D'Elia, captures the Xingu River's beauty and its importance to both human and natural ecosystems. Moments after, the screen is filled with buzzing machinery clearing the rainforest to construct the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam on the Xingu River in the eastern part of the Brazilian Amazon. The echoing of the ticking, clashing, and booming machinery tears the viewer from the previous shots of serenity and destroys the beauty they admired seconds ago. In the second part of the scene, the machines in the foreground are surrounded by cleared forest. As the viewer's eye recedes into the shot, the destruction lessens, showing a seemingly pristine forest at the far backstretches of the frame. The decimated forest in the foreground represents the threat posed to the rainforest in the background. The image warns that, if action is not taken, the machines will continue into the background and reduce the entire scene to flat red dirt.

Figure 1



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 29:22.

Figure 2



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 31:04.

In the scene above, D'Elia frames the dam as a monstrous and destructive project, encouraging audiences to protest Belo Monte. If the scene is removed from the film's context, however, it could be re-framed by developers as a narrative of economic growth and prosperity, framing the machinery and forest removal as

paving the way for jobs and generating natural resources. Audiences would therefore be likely to support Belo Monte due to the jobs and capital the dam will create. D'Elia, though, shifts the narrative from one of progress to one of loss.

Belo Monte is a contested symbol for opposing developmental and environmental stakeholders. The former seeks to label it as a beacon for economic growth, while the latter casts it as an omen of environmental degradation, human rights violation, and governmental and corporate corruption. In this article, I introduce how film as a medium permits images of reality to be framed and globally circulated. I examine how D'Elia frames Belo Monte against Roberts and Thanos' four factors for a global cause to generate influential discourse and forge a middle ground that invests multiple international groups and peoples. Ultimately, I seek to uncover why *Belo Monte: An Announcement of War* might resonate with viewers and provide a frame for Belo Monte that forges discourse, connects peoples, and inspires action.

## The Construction of Film

*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*, released in 2012, is a moving account of the politics of construction of the Belo Monte dam. The dam was originally proposed in 1975, but defeated due to national and international protest. In 2003, the Brazilian government re-scheduled the project to meet domestic and global energy demands. Upon completion Belo Monte will be the third largest hydroelectric dam in the world and will directly affect approximately 193 square miles of Brazilian rainforest flooding 256 square miles of land, 155 square miles of which is forest (Amazon Watch).

D'Elia seeks to generate transnational protest against Belo Monte by framing the dam as an environmental, social, economic, and humanitarian issue in order to generate a middle ground upon which activist groups and peoples can unite. A "middle ground" is a political space that forges a "mutually comprehensible world" characterized by new systems of meaning and exchange and is constructed by solidarity among people from diverse groups (Conklin and Graham 695). Film permits cross-border alliances to form around a specific issue, creating a transnational social movement comprised of "closely interrelated groups and organizations belonging to more than one country that sustain interaction for coordinating mobilization to reach common - but not necessarily transnational - goals" (Roberts and Thanos 178). People all over the world can interact with a cause through film and use it as a platform to unite and fight the cause at hand. D'Elia's narrative frame offers multiple groups a pathway to invest in the cause because they see an issue they are passionate about

being violated. D'Elia interviews politicians, reporters, engineers, fisherman, farmers, indigenous peoples, as well as national and international activists to gain a wide perspective on the arguments for and against Belo Monte.

*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War's* intended audience is young, international activists who are passionate about environmental, social, and economic issues. The film, for example, has English subtitles and was released on the online video platform Vimeo meaning the film is free to watch with no commercials and easily accessible to a global audience. Additionally, the film was funded through Catarse, a Brazilian, online crowd-funding site. D'Elia raised a total of R\$140 thousand (\$78,000 USD) from 3,429 supporters, making it the largest crowd-funded project in Brazilian history (*The Campaign*).

Ecological-documentaries (eco-docs), such as *Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*, can be a major tool for activists. Films have become easier and cheaper to make, and funding has become more accessible due to online crowd-sharing platforms (Hughes 736). Film serves as an important transportable medium to share the realities of distant locales. The sharing and promotion of films has increased due to digital formats, online video platforms, and social media.

Filmmakers can use eco-docs to create meaningful awareness of remote ecological spheres that contribute to forms of community activism in which the notion of "community" is expanded globally to include international actors (Hughes 737). The "inclusive, personal, and exploratory" nature of today's eco-docs allows audiences to visualize and hence realize the global community (Hughes 737). Global connectivity in turn generates investment in international issues and can inspire international action.

Eco-docs permit viewers to become familiar with distant subjects by "disembedding them [the subjects] for transport to be incorporated into new contexts and narratives" (Ivakhiv 18). The disembedding of the subject removes it from its original context and creates a contextual void around the subject. This void provides the captor of the image, in this case the director, the opportunity to ascribe it new meaning to reinforce the larger framing of the issue portrayed.

D'Elia's message aims at an international audience and aligns with Roberts and Thanos' four criteria for how a cause is globally perceived (Roberts and Thanos 178). The criteria, which follow in the list below, focus on overcoming barriers to involvement to forge an accessible middle ground.

1. The type of developer – whether state or multinational – and its investors/funders
2. The amount of political and legal space protesters have to maneuver
3. The economic situation of the country
4. The way citizens both at home and abroad respond to the struggle

D’Elia meets Roberts and Thanos’ criteria by framing Belo Monte as an environmental, economic, and social disaster generating a middle ground that multiple international groups can unite and use to justify action. D’Elia does so by pointing out the slew of multinational corporations invested in Belo Monte, revealing the economic ruin the dam will bring, featuring Indians, women, poor farmers and fisherman to show the cultural loss and human rights violations the dam will cause, and demonstrating national and international action being taken.

### **A Middle Ground Created by Multiple Realities**

In *Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*, D’Elia combines and repositions narratives about environmental destruction, human rights violations, and corporate corruption, both visually and figuratively, to frame the dam as destructive and to pull together activist groups on a middle ground. The ultimate narrative of the film touches upon Roberts and Thanos’ criteria to foster a middle ground by breaking down boundaries to investment and action. This work adapts Robert and Thanos’ specifications and applies it to the messaging and framing in *Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*. Exploring D’Elia’s work against Robert and Thanos’ exposes how messaging can be formulated to inspire global action. The criteria takes into account the background of the issue, the ramifications of the issue, the legality of action, and the desire of those who are directly affected to generate change. D’Elia provides multiple examples of these aspects in his film by exploring the multifaceted groups who will be affected by the dam.

The first criterion is the type of developers, investors, and funders. If a project is being developed and funded nationally, international interest is harder to generate due to national sovereignty. However, if the project involves multinational corporate interests, the project is a global investment. The Brazilian government states that Belo Monte is a government-funded project and foreign governments’ involvement is a violation of national sovereignty and an attempt to control Brazil’s

natural resources. In the film, D’Elia captures American director James Cameron’s visit to the Amazon and his meeting with famous indigenous leader Raoni Metuktire (D’Elia 11:56). Raoni welcomes Cameron and asks Cameron to help him halt Belo Monte by spreading the issue to an even larger audience. Right after this scene, D’Elia inserts a clip from a Brazilian television talk show in which Eraldo Pimenta, President of the Belo Monte consortium, publicly bashes Cameron’s visit to the Amazon and his involvement in Brazil’s national affairs. Pimenta remarks, “So that’s our message to James Cameron... go find something to do. Take care of your country, because of ours (sic) us Brazilians will take care” (D’Elia 12:51). The Brazilian government seeks to frame Belo Monte as a national issue and foreign intervention as a threat to Brazil’s authority and natural resources.

*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War* counters the Brazilian government’s cry for national sovereignty by highlighting the multiple international corporations invested in Belo Monte. In the film, Christian Poirier with Amazon Watch, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting the rainforest and indigenous rights in the Amazon Basin, states that though the Brazilian taxpayers are funding most of the dam, there are major international interests such as French, American, Chinese, German, and Austrian companies behind Belo Monte and other mega-projects in Brazil (D’Elia 13:36). Poirier cites that French private interests are heavily invested in several major Brazilian companies including GDF Suez, Alstom, and Tractebel. French companies also built the Gao Dam and the Estreito Dam, and run 13 large dams in Brazil. According to Poirier, these projects are disastrous and violate environmental and human rights. He continues, “France tries to position itself as a country that supports human rights. How can it own stake in companies like GDF Suez violating – blatantly violating human rights, destroying the environment in the Amazon? This must be exposed” (D’Elia 14:32). D’Elia’s emphasis on the massive French investment in Belo Monte illustrates to the audience that the dam is a Western project. Choosing to focus on France in particular exposes the Western viewers to their connection to Belo Monte. Poirier’s comments and D’Elia’s cinematic account show that Westerners are already involved in the project and they should take action to right their nation’s wrongs.

The second factor that determines a global cause is the legal room within which both sides can maneuver. Countries have their own domestic laws as well as international ones that provide legal grounds for action or lack thereof. Several times in the film, interviewees discuss

how national agencies, especially the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA), and international laws and protocols are being ignored to construct Belo Monte. D'Elia focuses on the lack of concern for environmental impacts as well as human and indigenous rights to emphasize the corrupt political nature of Belo Monte.

A scene in the film shows public defender Felício Pontes sitting in a nice office wearing a suit and tie at a table in front of three flags in a neat row, one of which is the Brazilian flag. Pontes looks official, is dressed formally, and is well-spoken, generating his credibility in the eyes of the viewer. He tells the camera, "One of the first problems was they [Belo Monte's developers] presented an environmental impact study, which didn't take into account all the elements that should have been analyzed within this study. And even so, IBAMA accepted this study and conceded the preliminary license" (D'Elia 8:40). Pontes goes on to express his concern that the government and the developers lack an understanding of and concern for the impacts of construction.

In another scene, activist Marquinhos Mota speaks more about IBAMA's corruption, stating there were two IBAMA presidents who refused to sign the report saying Belo Monte was viable, and both were fired. Also, there was a report signed by six IBAMA technicians stating that the project was not feasible, but the report was torn up, and all six technicians were fired. Yet, in the end, Belo Monte did receive its preliminary license, which leads Moto to question, "How can a country that commits this crime position itself globally as a defender of the environment?" (D'Elia 11:35) Exposing these major gaps in legal and bureaucratic proceedings suggest to the viewer that the Brazilian government and invested companies are determined to build Belo Monte at any cost. Furthermore, the government and developers' legal violations make Belo Monte's construction illegal.

D'Elia also highlights international legal action taken by the United Nations. D'Elia uses clippings from Brazilian newspapers to tell the story of the Organization of the American States' (OAS) request that Belo Monte not be built (fig. 3). The newspaper clippings read, "Government sees intrusion of OAS" and "Belo Monte: Organization has requested immediate suspension of the environmental license" (D'Elia 22:41). The decision to use newspaper clippings makes the request appear more official, yet less ardent. The use of newspaper text, with no narration over it, makes the request appear measured and impersonal, rather than as a passionate cry. OAS merely provides words on paper but is not shown taking

physical action to halt Belo Monte. The scene shows the viewer that the world does not support Brazil's decision, but there is a lack of international action being taken. It is therefore left up to the viewer to respond.

Figure 3



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 22:46.

This scene is followed by an info-graphic summarizing the rights guaranteed to all humans by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (fig. 4 & 5). The info-graphic begins by stating, "Every man,

Figure 4



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 23:54.

Figure 5



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 24:12.

woman, and child on Earth is born free...” (D’Elia 23:56). The black type pops against the flat tan backdrop, making the viewer slowly experience each word taking in its full meaning. The words flow in a transformative mixture of text and image to describe how humans are “Equal in dignity and rights... Brothers and sisters of this world... and should be friendly towards one another” (23:58). Above all, humans are entitled to the rights set forth in the UDHR. D’Elia juxtaposes the UDHR with the situation in Brazil to permit viewers to compare the two to encourage the audience to see how the rights outlined in the UDHR are being violated by the construction of Belo Monte. In doing so the scene frames Belo Monte as an international humanitarian issue providing a claim for outside intervention.

These scenes capture the Brazilian government and the invested corporations’ lack of concern to identify, understand, and take steps to mediate the potential effects of Belo Monte. The disregard for legality by the Brazilian government thereby makes the construction of Belo Monte illegal. Global citizens are therefore joining a fight against corruption and may feel a greater call to get involved.

The third factor to consider in Robert and Thanos’ theory is the state of Brazil’s economy. Developing countries are less likely to compromise projects they feel will benefit their economy and many development models place strong emphasis on the correlation between energy production and gross domestic product (GDP) (Schipper and Grubb 367). Therefore Latin American governments often side with developers because the government feels the country is dependent on the project’s fruition (Roberts and Thanos 168). In the film, D’Elia includes a Brazilian television clip of federal deputy Wandenkolk Goncalves saying, “I consider that Belo Monte is the shortest route for our development... It’s useless to say ‘for how long hasn’t the Trans-Amazonian highway come’ and it won’t come, it will only come due to Belo Monte. The Federal University of Xingu will only come due to Belo Monte. The jobs we need will only come due to Belo Monte” (D’Elia 28:35). From the frame the Brazilian government puts forth, Belo Monte is a solution rather than a problem.

D’Elia counters the Brazilian government’s claims of economic prosperity by bringing to attention the communities that were desolated by past mega-dams and interviewing the wide-range of peoples who will be adversely affected by Belo Monte. D’Elia captures the economic, environmental, and social ruin at other dam sites such as the Tucuruí and Jirau Dam to foreshadow Altamira’s future. D’Elia uses Brazilian TV footage of the

Tucuruí dam to show the realities of major construction projects. In a scene from the film, a small, old, faded color TV sits upon a shelf next to a pile of papers and books (fig. 6). The inclusion of the TV with the piles of paper and books next to it in the frame make it seem as if it is the viewer’s TV and they are seeing the footage in real time. This set up closes the distance created by viewing footage (the old TV clip) through another form of footage (the film) to bring the viewer closer to the images on the screen.

Figure 6



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*. Dir. Andre D’Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 33:13.

From the old TV an upbeat song starts “...this is a country that goes forward...” while on the screen there are scenes of Brazil’s tumultuous revolution showing excessive police and military violence (fig. 6). The music suddenly stops and images of the Tucuruí Dam pumping thousands of gallons of water appear on the small TV screen. Then the footage cuts to a woman with two small boys behind her (fig. 7). The camera is close to her face to

Figure 7



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*. Dir. Andre D’Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 33:20.

capture the anger in her expression as she says, “The dam came. It’s here. But who is it that profited from this? Us, no. It’s them who’s profiting. The powerful. The humble people aren’t profiting” (D’Elia 33:20). Right after, there

are images of barren muddy flats overrun with birds and piles of trash surrounding decrepit homes (fig. 8). Over

Figure 8



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*. Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 33:40.

these images a man's voice says, "Living in filth, mud, subject to abuse, horrible health conditions. We are suffering here" (D'Elia 33:40). Another man's voice takes over, "There is a lack of schools, sewage system and health services. There isn't anything" (D'Elia 33:51). The second man continues, telling how the residents caught many fish before the dam dried up their section of the river now, though, they are left without livelihoods. The whole village is suffering not just economically, but also in other aspects of life such as healthcare, education, and cultural loss. As he tells his story, the screen fills with older images of Tucuruí before the dam when there was a wide flowing surrounded by lush trees with fishermen leisurely pulling fish from their nets (fig. 9).

Figure 9



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*. Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 34:05.

These back-to-back before and after images capture the economic, social, and cultural ruin that befalls communities affected by major dam projects. These images counter the Brazilian government's insistence that these mega-projects bring prosperity and a better life to these villages, foreshadowing Altamira's fate if Belo Monte

is constructed. By making this reality known to the viewer, the viewer can see the fate of Altamira and know that not building Belo Monte is indeed better for the community. In addition, D'Elia interviews the Indians, fishermen, farmers, women's activists, and families in the state of Pará who will be affected by Belo Monte. D'Elia, by doing so, presents the viewer with multiple narratives against the dam. Each group of people provides another reason to oppose Belo Monte and also presents an opportunity for the viewer to connect with a cause related to the dam.

The local fishermen best capture the economic effects of Belo Monte. At a fishermen's protest in Pará, D'Elia shows the passionate and violent cries of the fisherman against the dam (fig. 10, p. 45). The fishermen zoom around in small boats on the Xingu with flags saying "Não as barragem de Belo Monte No Xingu" (Not the Belo Monte dam on the Xingu), yelling "Água para a vida!" (Water for life), and firing blanks into the air (D'Elia 34:25). The commotion in the scene reflects the chaos erupting in Altamira as the fishermen fight to maintain their way of life and their home. In an interview with an un-named local fisherman, he states how the dam will ruin the entire ecosystem and livelihoods of the region.

*Do you see how we are suffering?...  
If the dam comes where are we going to go?  
It will all be permanently underwater. So  
we won't have any more fish because they  
won't have the fruit to feed on. The river  
will rise and the fish that depend on the  
rocks to reproduce, such as the Tucunaré  
and the Acarí, this fish won't be able to  
reproduce anymore. So you see that our  
situation here is chaotic, difficult, and very  
sad. And the competent governmental  
organizations don't look at us, they look at  
the money (D'Elia 35:20).*

The commotion in the scene reflects the chaos erupting in Altamira as the fishermen fight to maintain their way of life and their home.

The economic impacts of the change in the river are easy to predict, but the film also touches upon how women are victims of major construction projects. The influx of male workers to dam sites leads to a rise in prostitution and sexual violence. An infographic in the film tells of the increase in crime in Altamira including, "Crimes Sexuais Aumento de 18.75%" (Sexual crimes up 18.75%) (D'Elia 51:51). A few shots later, Anonia Melo, of the Xingu Forever Alive movement against Belo Monte

Figure 10



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 34:26.

passionately tells the camera, “We always say that women are those who suffer most, who are harmed most, and consequently the girls and the children” (D’Elia 52:04). Melo explains that women in Rondônia where the Jirau Dam is being built and at the Tucuruí Dam in Pará are taken and tricked into working in brothels. Reporter Atanagildo Gatã recalls that in Tucuruí there were 325 brothels on one street and states, “Altamira mustn’t be turned into the dam’s whorehouse” (D’Elia 52:31). Although this narrative about women is not as apparent as the economic loss that will befall fishermen, the violence against women exposes another dimension and victim of the Belo Monte project. The less apparent narrative appeals to those who are passionate about humanitarianism and women’s rights, inspiring another group of activists to fight against Belo Monte.

Roberts and Thanos’ final factor for generating a transnational cause is national and international citizen response. For any movement to be successful, it needs a large group of supporters to take action. D’Elia uses Indians to capture Belo Monte’s destruction and exemplify involved community members. In *Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*, the Indians represent the multiple impacts of Belo Monte and serve as both the victim and warrior on the frontlines of the “war” against the dam.

The Indians, as with all other aspects of the film, are constructed through their inclusion in the film. Yet, Indians in the film are aware that their reality can be

manipulated after it is captured on film. As indigenous leader Kuyuci Kisedje frankly tells the camera in his native tongue,

*“This kind of shooting you’re doing, statements for journalists or movies, these white people’s things, you yourself are white. I don’t approve it. I never agree to give a statement, since a long time ago. I don’t know what you’re going to do with my recorded image. Would you screen it? Will you really show the truth as I said? That is why I don’t approve it”*  
(D’Elia 26:02)

This quote captures an unseen conflict between reality and cinematic portrayal. There are several layers of representation at play in the *Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*: how Indians present themselves, how society views Indians, and how the film constructs Indians. The key in this analysis is how D’Elia takes what is presented by the Indians in their villages and selects what is in the film.

*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War* seeks “Testimony through social transactions explicitly involving bodies, place, and awareness” (Shaman 85). The Indian is presented as a symbol and rallying point for action because they arouse public interest and sympathy (Ducarme 1). The film, by portraying Belo Monte as a threat to the physical world of the Indian, as well as the



body of the Indian (disease, sex trade, economy, etc.), transforms the dam into a regional threat because it endangers the Amazon's symbolic representatives.

D'Elia's representation of the Indians calls upon Western constructions of Indians as "noble savages." The notion equates indigenous populations with the human embodiment of perfect co-existence with nature. In Western cultures,

*The prelapsarian Noble Savage serves as a figure of moral absolution for the bad conscience of the industrial world, attesting to the continuing need on the part of some white liberal Americans to construct a pure, original Other that embodies absent values of authenticity and community, and thereby transcends the alienation of modernity* (Ingram 46).

The indigenous body, society, and culture often symbolize the pure, majestic nature of the region. In this film, the Indian is portrayed as an ideal to protect, and Belo Monte is shown to be threatening that ideal by endangering the Indian's body. Yet, in the face of this threat, D'Elia portrays the Indians as warriors. The war rhetoric throughout the eco-doc plays up the graveness of the dam and its consequences. From the viewer's first experience with the title and throughout the film Belo Monte is framed as a warzone. The "war" pits the Indians and other affected peoples against the Brazilian government and its corporate allies.

The rich warring history of the Indians, especially the Kayapòs, is highlighted throughout the film. In one scene, an Indian assaults the camera as if the technology represents Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff's face.

Figure 11



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 17:33.

The man is in an extreme close up and his hands move frantically in the foreground threatening to break the pictorial frame and hit the viewer as he passionately yells,

*You will die Dilma! It will happen anyway! It will happen! If not biologically, you will die anyway because you are sick. When you see my image and understand the reality of my people, you will definitely die in your thought. This idea of a dam is a sickness of your brain* (fig. 11).

His wife, in a feathered headdress and face paint, takes the screen next (fig. 12). She holds a wooden club that she uses to beat the air as she shouts, "I don't want the dam! I want to live on nature!" (D'Elia 17:35) Like her husband's actions, her violent movement threatens the viewer. The Indians are personifying the camera as a way to reach not only Dilma, but also the audience. Their words and bodies are enraged in turn assaulting their audience and projecting their passion as if to inspire the audience to fight with them.

Figure 12



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 17:49.

All the scenes filmed in the Indian villages in *Belo Monte: An Announcement of War* show the Indians performing traditional practices and exclude modern aspects of their life. In doing so, D'Elia encourages an ahistorical reading of indigenous culture in the film, playing upon the "noble savage" ideal. In D'Elia's coverage of the 50th Anniversary of the Xingu Indigenous territory his shots are devoid of modern technology and are back-dropped by central hubs of recognizable Indian culture. The following scene portrays the rich, unique aspects of Indian culture as a pre-technological ideal. In the scene, the Indian body and the backdrop are free of markers of contemporary society:

Open on a medium shot of a group of Indians with their backs to the camera. They are mostly nude besides bright, traditional bands around their waist and calves, radiant feathers and beaded necklaces. The group stretches beyond the frame and are several people deep making them seem immeasurable. In the background is a lush green forest and bright, blue sky. The air is echoing with sound of the Indians' feet stomping and their beads bouncing and punched with their loud cries as they move in and out in a tight formation on the flat earth. Above the group the words "50th Anniversary of the Xingu Indigenous territory" appear (fig. 13).

Cut to an extra-wide shot of the village where the group of Indians is seen in a tight circular formation moving back and forth in unison. Since the camera is far away, the group of Indians looks as if it is one, moving together. This shot includes several straw huts in the background and a few large, green trees. In the middle of the scene it reads "16 ethnicities together to discuss the most important issues" (fig. 14).

The final shot of the scene the Indians jog forward in two perfect lines chanting as their beads bounce in rhythm. The men and women are in separate lines, their faces are serious, and they look forward as not to meet the camera gaze as would recognize the camera's presence (fig. 15).

Figure 13



Belo Monte: An Announcement of War. Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 58:25.

Figure 14



Belo Monte: An Announcement of War. Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 58:40.

Figure 15



Belo Monte: An Announcement of War. Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube. 58:55.

In these shots, the Indians are removed physically and historically, reinforcing the noble savage ideal. Physically, the cinematography of the scene distances the viewer from the Indians. None of the Indians acknowledge the camera's presence and their state of undress goes against Western ideals of propriety. All Indians in the scene are mostly nude besides ceremonial costumes that include exotic feathers, intricate beadwork, shell necklaces, vibrant wraps on their arms and legs, and detailed body paint. From the Western perspective they appear to be homogenous reinforcing the Indians' united front and their cultural difference from the viewer. Furthermore, there is nothing familiar to Western viewers in the scene, from the stomping rhythm and indigenous cries to the straw huts. These aspects combine to make the viewer feel as if they are an invisible visitor in the village watching the Indian's rituals. D'Elia also chooses to have text on the screen rather than a voice-over to tell the viewer about the scene allowing viewers to hear the Indians' chants, musical instruments, and native language maintaining their authenticity by not mixing it with D'Elia's "modern" Portuguese.

The vibrancy of the space feels pure and a bit surreal as if it is unable to be a part of the modern world. The Indians in *Belo Monte: An Announcement of War* symbolize a harmony between man and nature. In contrast to this portrayal, Belo Monte is presented as an obstruction to that relationship. The Indians' portrayed relationship with the environment is used as fuel for their protest against Belo Monte. D'Elia uses the Indians' warring history to further intensify their action as seen in the last part of *Belo Monte: An Announcement of War* when indigenous peoples lead a protest at Belo Monte's construction site.

### Translating Cinematic Action into Viewer Investment

D'Elia distances the viewer in the Indian's village, but his shots of the protest at the dam site are inclusive. The camera work is shaky and the angles are strange, making the scene less formal while also acknowledging D'Elia's presence in the space in the form of cinematic imperfection. D'Elia uses this scene to draw the viewer into the trenches of protest as they occupy the

construction site with other protestors.

The scene begins early in the morning before the sun rises as Indians, activists, fishermen, cameramen, and other protestors walk to the protest site. The camera cuts to several close up shots of protestors rolling large rocks to form a barricade along the road to the construction site (fig. 16).

The shaky cinematography and angles at the level of the rocks make it appear as if the viewer is the one moving the rocks and participating in the protest. The following shots depict the indigenous peoples in feather headdresses and beaded necklaces, painting their faces and chanting in circles with spears as if preparing for battle (fig. 17). These actions further promote the war rhetoric evoked by D'Elia to capture the intensity of the protests.

The viewer sits, stands, and dances within and around the Indians and other protestors under the threat of guns carried by police. In these shots the camera pans up and down, tilts left to right, or changes selective focus, and brings different distances in and out of focus to visually explore the environment. The frequently changing shots orient the viewer to the space but also mimic realistic human movement in the space as one would look around to examine the different groups and activities. D'Elia's camera movement is sympathetic to the viewer's eye by slowly surveying the scenes around them and further equates the human eye and the technical camera to establish the viewer's presence in the film space.

Figure 16



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War*. Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012.YouTube.1:27:04.

Figure 17



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube.1:27:19.

The camera points to signs saying “private property” and “Investment of the federal government” to establish the viewer’s sense of place and acknowledge the illegality of their trespassing on a government site. The scene features several linguistic aspects that connect the viewer with D’Elia and the protestors. For example, protestors chant, “if you don’t stop Belo Monte we will stop Brazil” (D’Elia 1:27:42). Also, D’Elia states “When the army arrived we all knew the consequences” (D’Elia 1:28:25), identifying himself as one of the protestors there. The use of “we” by the protestors and D’Elia denotes a community invested in halting Belo Monte. The sense of meaningful community is made available to the viewer through the experience of film, in which the viewer’s virtual presence is established through the camera that is a part of the blockade translating to physical action within the frame.

In the end of the film, the protestors, including the viewers, are successful. For the day, construction of Belo Monte stops. D’Elia captures the abandoned equipment, vacant spots of cleared forests, and the sunset on the horizon that are a welcome scene of serenity amongst the tense shots of protest (fig. 18). The next shots transport

Figure 18



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012. YouTube.1:29:22.

the viewer all over Brazil. D'Elia shows Brazilians all over the country protesting the dam from Brasilia, where thousands of protesters are in the streets holding banners (fig. 19), to the Tucuruí dam where workers being abused by police (fig. 20), to Belo Monte's construction site with protesters throwing paint on machines (fig. 21). Through the film, viewers are able to see protests and action are already in motion.

It is important to note the film's lack of facilitating further viewer agency. There is little information about what the viewer can do outside of watching the film to affect change. The only outside link is to Raoni's petition against Belo Monte shown in the middle of the film. In an hour and forty-five minute film it is difficult once the film is over to remember and go back to the website named in the middle of the film. Furthermore at the end of the film, D'Elia does not include any websites, groups, or other videos to watch to further viewer involvement with the cause. Therefore the viewer is left empowered by the film, but with no direct access to more information, ultimately hindering activist efforts and makes the film less potent.

In the battle against Belo Monte, D'Elia seeks to subvert national boundaries to undermine the Brazilian government's national development framing and to forge a middle ground upon which multiple groups can combat Belo Monte. To do so, the film employs multiple narratives of affected peoples, such as women, farmers, fishermen, and Indians to expose the multifaceted effects of Belo Monte and to offer viewers several narratives with which they can connect. These narratives play upon Robert and Thanos' criteria for fostering a transnational cause by exposing international investment in Belo Monte, highlighting the dam's illegal permitting and violation of national and international law, showing the economic ruin the project will bring, and celebrating the action being taken.

Figure 19



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012.YouTube.1:31:39.

Figure 20



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012.YouTube.1:32:41.

Figure 21



*Belo Monte: An Announcement of War.* Dir. Andre D'Elia. CINEDELIA, 2012.YouTube.1:32:56.

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