

SEQUESTRADA

Impact Guide

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Where to Watch “Sequestrada”

iTunes: bit.ly/sequestrada-itunes

Vudu: bit.ly/sequestrada-vudu

Vimeo: bit.ly/sequestrada-vimeo

Amazon: bit.ly/sequestrada-amazon

Google Play: bit.ly/sequestrada-googleplay

SEQUESTRADA Impact Guide

When an indigenous Amazonian girl and her family go to protest the Belo Monte dam that threatens their reservation, she gets lost and kidnapped by traffickers. In order to find her family again, she must rely on the one man who holds the key to destroying all of her people...

Sequestrada follows Kamodjara and her father, Cristiano, members of the Arara, an Amazonian indigenous tribe in Brazil. When they leave their reservation to protest a dam that will displace their people, Kamodjara is separated from her family and kidnapped by traffickers.

Roberto, an indigenous agency bureaucrat overseeing a report that could change everything, is under pressure to support the dam's construction. Thomas, an American investor in the dam, makes his way to Brazil to sway Roberto's opinion. The film tells the story of how these three lives intertwine against a backdrop of geopolitics and environmental disaster.

Making Sequestrada

Sequestrada is a fiction film that aims to draw audience into the real-life drama of the deforestation happening in the Amazon through poignant storytelling. Shot on location in Brazil, Sequestrada is based on the real-life construction of the Belo Monte Dam, which is displacing the Arara people - who have lived along the Amazon River for countless generations. Members of the indigenous tribe helped shape the story and script, offering up their own experiences and acting alongside established actors, such as Tim Blake Nelson and Gretchen Moi. The film, which had its world premiere at the Beijing Film Festival, weaves together social justice issues, including displacement and human trafficking, in front of a backdrop of geopolitics and environmental disaster.

Sequestrada Impact Guide Objectives

The purpose of this impact guide is to encourage audiences to think critically about the complex issues facing the Amazon and to foster active participation in saving the Amazon Rainforest and its indigenous people. The hope is that, ultimately, all viewers of Sequestrada will leverage the communication tools provided through the Move On Climate Change initiative to engage in civic political action.

Using the Sequestrada Impact Guide

Here we outline a set of pre- and post-screening discussion questions and topics. Ask yourself and your audience the pre-screening questions to begin to frame the film in the context of relevant issues. After the film, review the post-screening discussion questions and topics. We've provided additional information in later sections related to investment problems, corruption, social action, and issues with engineering. As you can see, these issues are interrelated and complex.



Watch the movie, and host a discussion. Use the questions below to guide the conversation.

Pre-Screening Discussion

- How would you describe the Amazon Rainforest?
- Do you understand its importance in climate regulation?
- Are you aware of the political history surrounding the Amazon in Brazil?
- Do you know the specifics of how indigenous groups have and continue to protect the Amazon?
- Are you aware of all of the ways indigenous people are impacted by industrial activities in the Amazon?

Post-Screening Discussion

- Are there any characters whose particular motives and storyline spoke to [the audience] specifically?
- Did anyone have new insight into the issues after viewing the film?
- How has the way you think about these issues changed/ how will it continue to change?
- What issues does [the audience] feel they could do something about (ideas for personal activism within their companies)?

Open-Ended Discussion Topics

- Activism in indigenous populations affected by the dam
- Activism against government versus activism against investors/business



The Belo Monte dam is the 4th largest hydroelectric dam in the world. The approval and construction of the dam was fought by numerous indigenous, environmental, and social justice groups. The Belo Monte dam has successfully been halted before, and for good reason. The very building of it is a violation of human rights under Brazilian law, as it displaces indigenous communities whose land rights are protected under the constitution. Unfortunately, this is not unique to the Belo Monte Dam. Brazil plans to build 49 dams in the Tapajos Basin alone. The construction would not only uproot people from their homes, but would also increase deforestation due to road-building and the inevitable influx of people that would follow. The “2010” plan included 297 dams that were supposed to have been constructed by 2010.

These construction processes also emit a great deal of methane into the atmosphere, though the volume varies vastly from dam to dam, which would further contribute to climate change. Deforestation, particularly in the Amazon, could push the rainforest to a tipping point beyond which the ecosystem will be unable to self-remedy the damage. In fact, the tipping point has been estimated to be when 20-25% of the rainforest has been removed, and 20% has already been deforested. Thus, if only 5% more is removed, the end of the estimation point would be reached.

Hydropower is projected to be decreasingly reliable as an energy source, as climate change and deforestation increasingly destabilize regional precipitation patterns. Deforestation directly, and almost immediately, impacts

these patterns because the rainforest creates moisture. As moisture comes off the Atlantic Ocean it falls on the forest as rain. This water gets sucked up by deep roots, then moves through plants and across the surface of leaves before returning to the atmosphere. Winds blowing over the uneven forest canopy create turbulence, which allows the atmosphere to absorb more moisture. This moisture is responsible for about half of the rainfall in the forest. Without it, droughts will continue to increase.

In addition, construction costs of dams worldwide have an average cost overrun of 56%. The Belo Monte dam has surpassed double its initial cost, and the Itaipu dam, built in Brazil in the 1970s, reached a cost overrun of 240%. Fortunately, Brazil has a great deal of untapped energy potential to invest

in that wouldn't breach human rights in construction, such as offshore wind generation or solar power production in semi-arid regions. Additionally, these sources are better long term energy solutions.

In the original Belo Monte dam plans, the high-risk project was invested in by a vast majority of state-owned companies; though it was purported to be a private project, they weren't private investors. "The Brazilian government is parading a few small-time players in the country's hydroelectric market to give the appearance that investors are actually interested in the dam. In reality, the participation of private companies in the consortium was only made possible because the government fronted huge subsidies for them to do so."

Dams and Climate Change

While hydropower is often thought of as a source of renewable, clean energy, greenhouse gas emissions associated with dams suggest otherwise. Water reservoirs, especially in the Amazon, emit substantial amounts of methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes to climate change, as a result of organic matter decomposition in deep, oxygen depleted water. Methane, a natural byproduct of this decay, floats to the surface of reservoirs and is released into the atmosphere, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, hydroelectric dams impede natural water flow, which works for generating electricity but becomes problematic in a changing climate. Climate change increases the occurrence of droughts that decrease water availability and extreme precipitation events and flooding that can cause destruction to dams and surrounding communities.

In other words, the government used the handful of private investors as a means of making dam building projects look reasonable. In reality, from both an economic and environmental perspective, they aren't.

"Taxpayers and workers with investments in pension funds have no idea of the huge risks associated with Belo Monte. The workers of Petrobras, Caixa Economica Federal, and Banco do Brasil are spending their retirement money to subsidize what private investors are afraid to touch," said Raul do Vale, spokesperson from the Instituto Socioambiental.

Investing in dams that so clearly violate human rights and environmental standards will cause bad press. Munich Re – one of the biggest insurance companies in the world and one that covered risks in the construction of Belo Monte – was subsequently removed from the Global Challenges Index simply for being involved in the project. The involvement alone was enough to constitute a “violation of environmental standards.”

Corruption

In order to have the Belo Monte construction contract approved, the consortium paid a sum of at least R\$30 million, or US\$8 million to the Workers Party.

There were also claims and subsequent raids regarding payments to government officials and politicians for contract approval.

People living near and along the Xingu protested from the onset of the plans, and the protests escalated through 1989. The dam was originally called Kararaô (meaning war cry) but was changed to Belo Monte that year in an attempt to make it less abrasive. Along with the name change, the government reduced the number of dams planned to only the one in order to calm the growing resistance that had had such a significant impact in the past. Since then, the plans were changed to include more dam construction and resistance is growing once again.

In addition, “Walter Coronado Antunes, the former Secretary of the Environment of the state of São Paulo and ex-President of the influential state water and sanitation utility Sabesp, said that, if built, Belo Monte Dam would be “the worst engineering project in the history of hydroelectric dams in Brazil, and perhaps of any engineering project in the world. Something that we engineers should truly feel ashamed of.” He added that the Xingu River’s huge variations in flow between summer (when the river level decreases dramatically) and winter months (when the river levels increase significantly again) would spell “technical and economic disaster for the dam.”

Take Action

Move on Climate Change
moveonclimatechange.org



Inspired by Sequestrada, Move on Climate Change is an initiative aimed at providing audiences with easily accessible tools to voice their concerns to key stakeholders.

Please visit the website and join the fight to save the Amazon Rainforest.



SEND A LETTER TO THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SEND A LETTER TO THE AMERICAN CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES

SEND A LETTER TO THE CEO OF BLACKROCK

CALL YOUR SENATOR

Move on Climate Change makes it easy to get your voice heard in the fight to protect the Amazon. Choose from a variety of letter templates and phone scripts addressed to relevant leaders and become part of the global movement.

Directors' Statement



Sabrina had been doing research in Brazil for fifteen years and made her first documentary about people displaced by large dams. She received funding to go to the Amazon, where the world's third largest dam was being built and contested by indigenous groups who were illegally affected. We mapped out a plot. Sabrina had worked with organizations contesting dams for a long time. We planned to meet with a few of them based near Belo Monte to find out more about the past thirty years, including Sting protesting the dam and a Kayapo woman slashing a government official in 1984.

Then we left for Altamira, ourselves. The last plane to the Amazon was full of men, workers going to the Belo Monte Dam. Sabrina and a flight attendant were the only women. When the doors opened in Altamira, we felt the sauna of the Amazon.

Altamira is a small town where indigenous tribes visit to buy flip flops, t-shirts, and supermarket junk food. We approached a group that we learned were Arara. We spent about three days with them to see if they wanted to be on camera. On the third day, the entire Arara tribe disappeared. They re-appeared with a huge bag of live turtles. They invited Sabrina to sit in the local indigenous housing and eat a turtle they had just cooked. It was here that they started to open up. We learned that in their system, the chief (cacique) decides everything, so we mainly tried to speak to him. He was a quiet, young man. Later, we found he had only been cacique for one year. There was another man with thick glasses, who had been watching us. We talked to him. It turned out that he had been the chief for many years before this young man.

When the cacique decided we were not dangerous, he stopped being a quiet man. We created a character for him so he could speak about the Arara tribe and the Belo Monte dam. The last day of the shoot, he asked Soopum if he could try his hat. He wore Soopum's hat and was silent for a long time, smiling. He seemed proud and happy. But it was Soopum's only hat, and

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the Equator sun made Soopum's black hair so hot that he really needed the hat. Sabrina didn't want to give up her hat, either. Soopum politely asked for the hat back. The cacique and tribe members thanked us for making this film. We hugged the Arara and parted ways.

Sabrina guided the storyline, exploring how government corruption undergirded the illegal construction of massive infrastructure, damaging lives and releasing methane from the degradation of flora and fauna. Soopum added fictional plot lines with traditional film language under the given location and situations. Together, we captured true moments with the actors when they were living

normally. We all wrote together based on footage. Tribe members wrote with us. Each character's life and the fictional plot became interwoven. We constructed scenes with them, explaining where we thought the storyline was going and recording their reactions, modifying the plot with their perspectives and lines from their personal experiences.

With that approach, we fused real and imagined worlds in multiple layers, the real effects the dam has on climate change and the lives of indigenous people who live nearby, along with a narrative of imagined characters who reflect the stories of how Belo Monte came to be what it is today.

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CAST

Kamodjara Xipia de Ferreira
(Kamodjara)

Tim Blake Nelson (Thomas)

Marcelo Olinto (Roberto)

Gretchen Mol (Grace)

Cristiano G. Nascimento (Father)

Andressa Yudja (Mother)

CREW

Written / Directed by Sabrina
McCormick and Soopum Sohn

Produced by Sabrina McCormick

Executive Producers: Tim Blake
Nelson and Chris Hohn

Edited by Etienne Boussac, Soopum
Sohn, and Sabrina McCormick

Music by Marco Antonio Guimares



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Sabrina McCormick, (Writer/Director) PhD, fuses sociology, public health, the law and filmmaking to address the climate crisis. Her debut feature, *Sequestrada*, premiered at the Beijing International Film Festival, starring Tim Blake Nelson and indigenous non-actor Kamodjara Xipaia. McCormick was Producer on segments of the series, *The Years of Living Dangerously*, that won the Emmy for Best Documentary Series in 2014, producing stories starring Matt Damon and Michael C. Hall, and has produced and directed several other documentary projects such as *No Family History*, about the environmental causes of breast cancer, and *After the Cap*, an interactive documentary about the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

As an expert, McCormick has published widely, most recently in *Science*, *Nature*, and *Climatic Change*, and has advised the Obama White House, Congress and the State Department. Dr. McCormick was Lead Author on the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a Science & Technology Policy Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a Robert Wood Johnson Health & Society Scholar, and a Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center. She is currently member of the Climate Communication Initiative for the National Academies of Sciences. She is the author of two books, and over fifty articles and book chapters. Dr. McCormick's work is regularly featured in the media, such as *NBC Nightly News*, *NPR*, *TIME Magazine*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and many other media outlets. She is Associate Professor at Milken Institute School of Public Health at George Washington University and Senior Fellow at Wharton at the University of Pennsylvania.



Soopum Sohn (Co-Writer/Co-Director) makes cross cultural films that explore questions of identity, assimilation and power. His short and feature-length works have been presented at the Cannes Film Festival ("Fish in the sea is not thirsty"), the Busan International Film Festival ("Fetish"), and the Museum of Modern Art. His short film "Island to Island" was the recipient of a Student Academy Award. As a cinematographer, his work includes "Sa-kwa", "Knucklehead," "Happy New Year," "Return of Sergeant Lapins," and "Mitchellville." Raised in Seoul, he attended NYU Film School and the American Film Institute. He currently resides in Brooklyn and teaches film production at Long Island University, where he is an associate professor.

Interested in learning more about SEQUESTRADA and continuing the conversation? Follow the film on social media:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/sequestradafilm>

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<https://twitter.com/SequestradaFilm>

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