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Flooded

Development, Democracy, and Brazil's Belo Monte Dam

by Peter Taylor Klein

DESCRIPTION

Winner of the 2023 Marysa Navarro Best Book Prize from the New England Council for Latin American studies

In the middle of the twentieth century, governments ignored the negative effects of large-scale infrastructure projects. In recent decades, many democratic countries have continued to use dams to promote growth, but have also introduced accompanying programs to alleviate these harmful consequences of dams for local people, to reduce poverty, and to promote participatory governance. This type of dam building undoubtedly represents a step forward in responsible governing. But have these policies really worked?

Flooded provides insights into the little-known effects of these approaches through a close examination of Brazil's Belo Monte hydroelectric facility. After three decades of controversy over damming the Xingu River, a tributary of the Amazon, the dam was completed in 2019 under the left-of-center Workers' Party, becoming the world's fourth largest. Billions of dollars for social welfare programs accompanied construction. Nonetheless, the dam brought extensive social, political, and environmental upheaval to the region. The population soared, cost of living skyrocketed, violence spiked, pollution increased, and already overextended education and healthcare systems were strained. Nearly 40,000 people were displaced and ecosystems were significantly disrupted. Klein tells the stories of dam-affected communities, including activists, social movements, non-governmental organizations, and public defenders and public prosecutors. He details how these groups, as well as government officials and representatives from private companies, negotiated the upheaval through protests, participating in public forums for deliberation, using legal mechanisms to push for protections for the most vulnerable, and engaging in myriad other civic spaces. *Flooded* provides a rich ethnographic account of democracy and development in the making. In the midst of today's climate crisis, this book showcases the challenges and opportunities of meeting increasing demands for energy in equitable ways.

AUTHOR/EDITOR BIOGRAPHY

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