

Systematizing impacts on Cultural Heritage

Carlos Eduardo Caldarelli

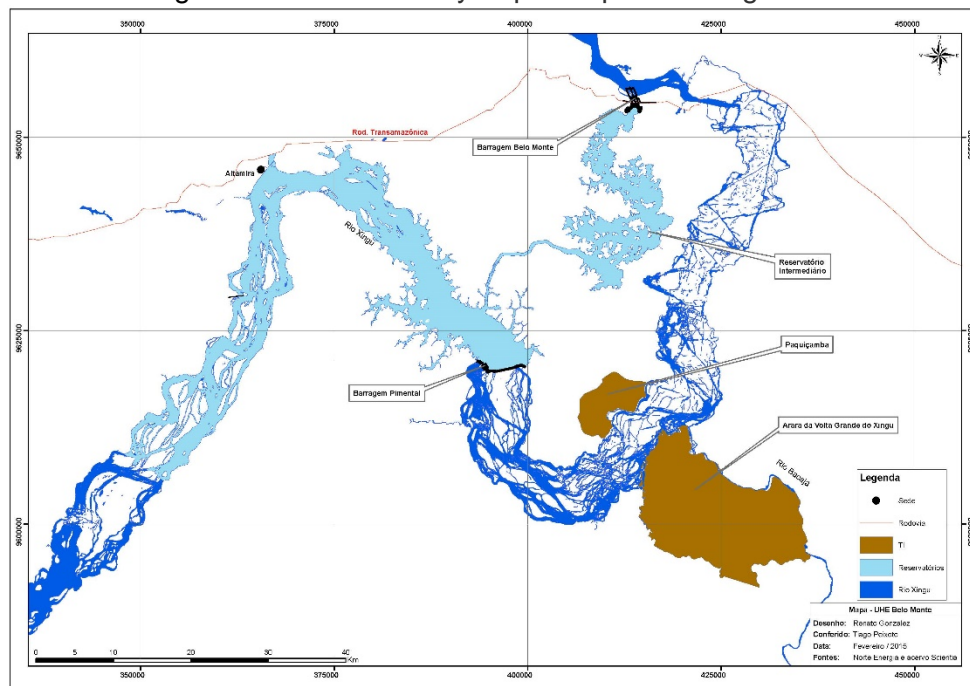
SUMMARY

This paper presents a provisional systematization of the impacts caused by large developments on Cultural Heritage goods. The proposed systematization will be exemplified through cases concerning the ongoing building of the Belo Monte hydropower plant at the Xingu river basin in Brazil.

INTRODUCTION

The Belo Monte hydropower plant is currently being built at Volta Grande region on the Xingu river, between the parallels 3°00' and 3°40'S and the meridians 51°30' and 52°30'W (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Belo Monte hydropower plant arrangement



In this region, as well as in the entire Brazilian Amazon, the borderline among indigenous peoples, runaway black slaves, and white men marginalized by either poverty or isolation have been progressively blurred throughout history.

There have been countless forms of contact among these groups, which produced, among other things, a miscegenation factor which wasn't only limited to the mestizo population resulting from this. It also stretched out to culture, resulting in the formation

of original intangible cultural assets and tangible cultural assets associated to them, especially in small communities.

This miscegenation factor, in its broader sense, would still be intensified between the end of the 19th and the beginning the 20th centuries with the arrival of workers, originally from the Northeast region, to work in the latex extraction. The archaeological sites and the small or medium-sized towns in the region also contain locally important Cultural Heritage goods. These goods will be impacted by the implementation of the Belo Monte hydropower plant.

This short paper presents two examples of impacts caused by implementing the Belo Monte hydropower plant on cultural assets existing in its area of influence, proposing with its help a provisional systematization of the impacts caused by large developments on Cultural Heritage goods.

Impacts of large developments on Cultural Heritage goods – the proposed systematization

Usually, the implementation impacts from large-sized developments on cultural assets existing in their area of influence are negative and result from the interferences on goods and important places for the conservation of assets, such as archaeological sites or important buildings, or still to the production, reproduction and enjoyment of assets such as celebrations and traditional fairs.

These negative impacts are also generally due to population movements (flux and reflux of temporary population contingents, individual and collective migrating movements, settlements, etc.), because they alter the composition of these groups and social networks that have any relationship with local cultural assets, and/or because they bring population contingents from outside which usually possess different lifestyles and values from the existing ones, which are often incompatible. This could be a permanent or a temporary event.

These population movements, especially the ones resulting from the attractiveness of the development, manifested even in the planning phase, cause the alteration, degradation or suppression of buildings and urban sites of cultural significance and/or of historical or architectural importance.

As a result, communities are partially or totally relocated and often their members are set apart, and, therefore, local cultural assets are compromised or even disappear.

Hence, the proposed systematization is the following:

a) Alteration of cultural references, a negative impact on Cultural Heritage goods resulting from the generating factors described above, not anticipating that the impacted goods are suppressed.

b) Loss of cultural references, also a negative impact on Cultural Heritage goods that ceases to be reproduced or consists in its pure and simple suppression.

Impacts caused by implementing the Belo Monte hydropower plant on Cultural Heritage goods – two examples

a) Alteration of cultural assets

The city of Altamira lies within the Belo Monte hydropower plant area of influence and it has a large number of mansions which are historical witnesses from the latex extraction heydays, as it was the entire Brazilian Amazon.

The implementation of the Belo Monte hydropower plant attracted a workforce contingent that virtually doubled its population, creating an exceptional demand for services. In the figures 2 and 3 we can see one of the mansions in Altamira. It was remodeled to accommodate a restaurant after the start of the works at the plant.

Figure 2 – Mansion before remodeling



Figure 3 – Mansion after remodeling



Although the mansion has not been destroyed, the alteration of its use and the consequent structural alterations it went through make it difficult, if not impossible, the recognition of its characteristics as a building of historical importance.

b) Loss of cultural assets

In the Belo Monte hydropower plant area of influence there are old communities where traditional celebrations occur. It's the case of the Santo Antonio community where the party and procession of Santo Antonio, the community patron saint, used to take place.

Due to the fact that the construction of Belo Monte hydropower plant structures were planned on its territory, the community of Santo Antonio was broken up, with its inhabitants compensated and dispersed. With this dispersion, the party and the procession were lost. The figures 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 show, respectively, details from the procession, the Santo Antonio community localization before breaking up, the spreading of members of Santo Antonio community after breaking up displayed on a

chart made by themselves, and the structures of Belo Monte hydropower plant on the area formerly occupied by the community.

Figure 4 – Santo Antonio procession in the community with the same name



Figure 5 – Detail from the Santo Antonio procession



Figure 6 – Localization of the Santo Antonio community before its break up

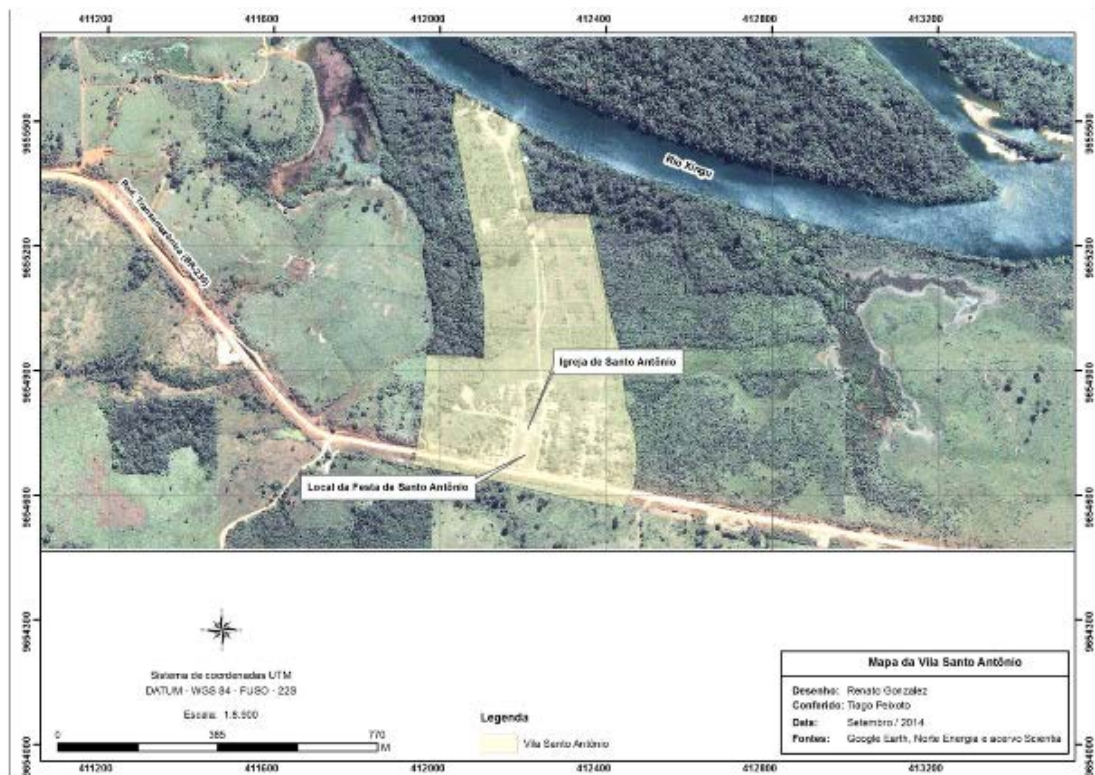
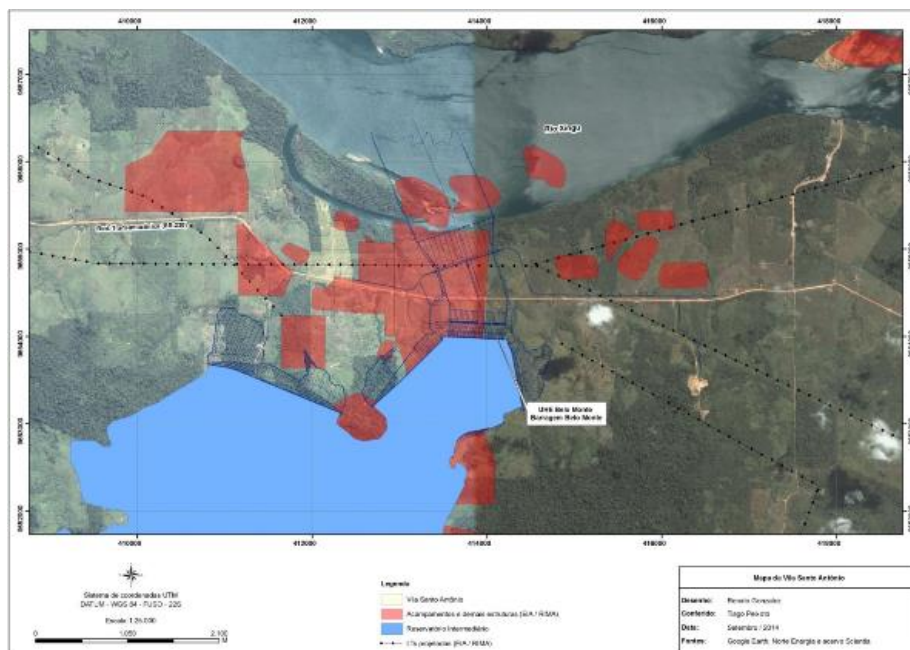


Figure 7 – Spreading of members of Santo Antonio community after breaking up (each family is represented by a small white piece of paper affixed on the chart)



Figure 8 – Belo Monte hydropower plant structures (red dots) on the territory formerly occupied by the Santo Antonio community (compare with Figure 6)



In this case, with the Santo Antonio community breaking up, both the party and the procession cease to be reproduced.