

Transamazônica Highway: the challenge of economic and social development

Auto-estrada Transamazônica: o desafio do desenvolvimento econômico e social

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Naeglisson Almeida

Graduado

Instituição de atuação atual: Iniciativa Privada

E-mail: naeglisson_almeida45@gmail.com

Fabiana Lucena Oliveira

Doutorado

Instituição de atuação atual: Universidade do Estado do Amazonas

E-mail: flucenaoliveira@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper presents Transamazônica Highway. This is a spatial integration project, since the sixties, that inaugurated its stage in 1974. In these forty-three years, other stages of the highway were completed, without finalizing its own totality. From its original, which predicts its connection with Peru, Transamazônica Highway disappears in the city of Lábrea, state of Amazonas. Isolation, lack of essential services and difficulties in material supplies are some of the problems faced by this community and its environment. A bibliographical review of the original design and construction of the Highway was carried out, as well as visits to the unpaved road that currently exists and is used by the population of the last city, Lábrea, in precarious conditions. The discussion on environmental impacts is always presents in Amazon issues. There are justifications against the construction and completion of the road as well as defenders of its completion for community service and social inclusion. By identifying the last stretch of Transamazônica Highway is in full use, although in adverse conditions of security and negotiation, we defend the asphaltting and completion of works, as a way of social insertion of a community that is waiting for better way of life.

Key words: Transamazônica Highway, environmental impact, Amazon region, supply.

RESUMO

Este documento apresenta a Auto-Estrada Transamazônica. Este é um projecto de integração espacial, desde os anos sessenta, que inaugurou a sua etapa em 1974. Nestes quarenta e três anos, outras etapas da auto-estrada foram concluídas, sem que a sua própria totalidade tivesse sido finalizada. Do seu original, que prevê a sua ligação com o Peru, a Auto-Estrada Transamazônica desaparece na cidade de Lábrea, estado do Amazonas. O isolamento, a falta de serviços essenciais e as dificuldades de abastecimento material são alguns dos problemas enfrentados por esta comunidade e pelo seu ambiente. Foi feita uma revisão bibliográfica do projecto e construção original da Auto-Estrada, bem como visitas à estrada não pavimentada que actualmente existe e é utilizada pela

população da última cidade, Lábrea, em condições precárias. A discussão sobre os impactos ambientais está sempre presente nas questões da Amazônia. Há justificações contra a construção e conclusão da estrada, bem como defensores da sua conclusão para serviço comunitário e inclusão social. Ao identificar o último troço da Transamazônica está em pleno uso, embora em condições adversas de segurança e negociação, defendemos a asfaltamento e conclusão das obras, como forma de inserção social de uma comunidade que está à espera de um melhor modo de vida.

Palavras-chave: Auto-estrada Transamazônica, impacto ambiental, região amazônica, abastecimento.

1 INTRODUCTION

Regional development is an issue increasingly present in the academic-scientific day by day life, especially when it comes to some states in the North and Northeast, which have lower levels of development than other states in Brazil. The Amazon region with its wealth of natural resources, and poor in economic and social development, is an enigmatic region. Analyzing historically, it is possible to identify several attempts by the government to promote regional development through physical integration, that is, building roads and federal highways, such as BR-230, better known as the Transamazônica Highway. According to the transport and development literature, one way to bring better living conditions and development to a community is the spatial integration, which involves the construction of different modal routes.

Projected as a result of a great drought in the Northeast in the early 1970s during the government of General Emílio Garrastazu Médici, the Transamazônica highway emerged as a project of the National Integration Program (NIP) to economically develop the states of the North through integration with the states of the Northeast, in order to allow the flow of regional production, and also to provide civilian circulation away from the drought. The original project consisted of about 5000 km starting in the municipality of Cabedelo at Paraíba State and ending in the municipality of Benjamin Constant at Amazonas state integrating with country of Peru. This work was interrupted and never resumed, finalizing in the municipality of Lábrea at state of Amazonas, totaling its passage in 18 municipalities.

Figure 1 – Transamazônica Highway (BR-230)



Source: Transport Ministry (2017)

Forty-three years after its inauguration in 1974, the Transamazônica Highway is practically unusable, due to the non-completion of the work and the lack of pavement in more than half of its extension, a fact that sustains the argument of the environmentalists who affirm that its existence brought more environmental degradation than economic development. It is important to say that in Brazil, there is no consensus about the Amazon region. People who lives in the poor regions are still waiting for basic services, like doctors and dentists for example.

2 OBJECTIVES

To discuss if this highway (BR-230) will be useful for the development of Labrea, which is the last city on Brazilian road route and which has the work not completed.

To identify how much would cost to complete the work.

To identify which kind of environmental impact would happen.

3 TRANSAMAZÔNICA HIGHWAY

According to Velho (2008), the 1970 drought, together with the usual formation of emergency "work fronts" to mitigate mass unemployment, produced the first major measures to transcend the Northeast. On July 16, 1970, President Médici established the National Integration Plan (NIP), with the main objective of taking advantage of the Northeastern workforce by integrating it with other regions. The main work of the

National Integration Plan was the construction of Transamazônica Highway, which would integrate the Northeast to the North.

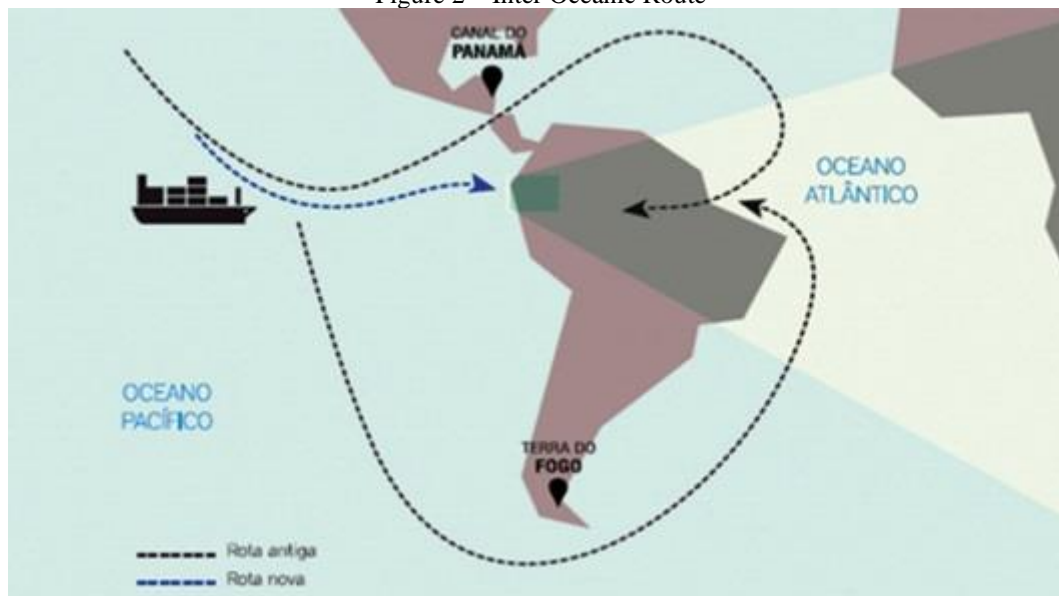
After the announcement of highway creation, several criticisms were made regarding the construction of the work. One of the strongest came the former minister Roberto Campos. According to him, one of the problems with the construction of the road was the lack of interest to verify its "economic viability". Velho (2008) further states that "the plan was received with much more enthusiasm in the Center-South than in the Northeast and in the Amazon region," because the people living in these regions advocated integration with developed regions, such as the center-south, and not between two "miserable" regions. In an overview, the road seemed more important politically than economically, a fact that makes it impossible to study impacts considering all the aspects related to the work.

Another important factor in the creation of highways is the environmental one. According to Fearnside (2010) when the Transamazônica Highway was built during the military dictatorship, it was enough for a general to draw a line on a map and order the construction of the road. There was no environmental impact study. Fearnside further states that "roads built today will be the drivers of deforestation for decades to come. They represent a real force in accelerating deforestation, despite assertions to the contrary. " It is possible to observe, according to the author's statements, that this is completely against the construction of highways, since, according to him, roads only bring environmental damage and no economic benefit.

According to Neto (2014), it is possible to identify opinions favorable to the construction of highways, "the importance that regional integration has assumed in Brazil's foreign policy since the second half of the 1980s and is always among the highest priorities national ". However, it is not verified the role that regional integration should have in all domestic policies, that is, the study of regional integration is insufficiently performed, not including its regional impact. Djalma Batista, in his work "The complex of the Amazon - analysis of the development process" (1976) already affirmed that physical integration is one of the solutions for the regional development. According to him, as the integration of road and waterway with Peru, from the Trans-Amazonian, it is possible to streamline the flow of domestic production and export through the Pacific, making efficient the connection with Europe and Asia. According to Maria (2014), a delegation of Peruvians from the Loreto government, together with Amazon Federation Industries (FIEAM), maintains negotiations to open an international route, linking the

Brazilian side with our interests in the Port of Iquitos in Peru and from there to the in front of the transportation done by the nationals of Ecuador, linking Iquitos to Manta, and Peru connecting Iquitos to the three Peruvian ports.

Figure 2 – Inter Oceanic Route



Source: Maria, 2014

4 METHODS

Quali-quantitative research, with inductive method and also bibliographical references about the planning and construction of the first highway stages of work. It was also integrated with the bibliography, works that expose the importance of physical integration for regional development, showing its main proponents and critics. A comparison of performance indicators representing economic and social development between the municipalities of Lábrea and Humaitá (two municipalities with almost the same population, large in the same region using two different highways). The idea was to compare these two municipality indicators, with and without highway. Maps were used to verify the physical space in which the BR-230 covers.

The data source was mainly from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), collecting the economic and social growth indexes of the municipalities involved in the research. These were: Gross Domestic Product, Human Development Index, Population, Income per capita.

5 RESULTS

With work completed all people at Labrea and smallest cities around, would be affected. Gross Domestic Product would improve, Human Development Index would improve also, due to facility of materials and services to arrive and leave this area. Labrea would be a small city with services which is not common in the amazona region. Income per capita would be also impacted: with more services and materials, more people employed would happen, avoiding migration to Manaus, which has become a state-city.

The road works has a positive impact with regard to regional development. It should also be noted that, with the creation of highways, it is possible to provide opportunities for economic development not only for the municipalities that contemplate them, but also for the nearby municipalities, considering that the main impact would be the triggering of chain development policies, taking advantage of the advantageous economic factor of that municipality, which would lead to a positive impact on the surrounding municipalities that can be provided of products and services more effectively.

6 CONCLUSION

Although we know the Amazon forest needs preservation, we cannot forget the populations that live in it. To condemn these populations not to enjoy the modern benefits in the name of preservation is not fair. Allowing integration is imperative. With this so, we suggest the conclusion of the highway, with rules of occupation along the road, formulated in order to preserve the forest, in a harmonious conviviality.

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