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Guest lecture: Jerson Kelman

Water and energy in Brazil

Professor Jerson Kelman, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro
Monday 10 March 2014, 5pm, Blue Boar Lecture Theatre, Christ Church, Oxford

About 5% of the Brazilian population live in the northeast corner of the country. They share the same language, culture, institutions, education and political system as the other 95%. Yet, they have by far the lowest per capita income. What really differentiates this region from the rest of the country is hydrological variability. How to mitigate this problem?

About 10% of the Brazilian population live in the north part of the country, in the Amazon River basin, where new power plants are being built to tap the energy from the mighty rivers and transmit it to large urban centers, located thousands of kilometres away. What is the trade-off between the energy benefits that accrue to the majority of the population and the environmental and social impacts that affect local people, including indigenous populations?

Jerson Kelman is a Civil Engineer and Ph.D. in water resources. He was the president of two Brazilian governmental authorities – on water and on electric energy – and was the CEO of two Brazilian power companies (Light and Eneersul), serving about 15 million people. Kelman is or has been a member of several boards: Brazilian Sustainable Development Foundation; Energy Councils of the Brazilian Industry; ABENGOA International Advisory Board, UNESCO Institute for Water Education in the Netherlands; Brazilian Councils of Energy, Environment and Water Resources. In 2003, he received the King Hassan II Great World Water Prize.

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