

Alternatives to mining: past, present, and future in Nova Lima, Minas Gerais State, Brazil

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Abstract: This article discusses alternative options to mining in the municipality of Nova Lima, Minas Gerais State, Brazil, particularly in the district of São Sebastião das Águas Claras/Macacos. Its primary hypothesis is that community-based (eco)tourism may become a counter-hegemonic activity to mining expansion in the region. It contributes to theoretical reflections in the field of Latin American Political Ecology and Tourism and to social movements and public policies in related areas. The study conducted bibliographic and documentary research and participant analysis and found the municipality of Nova Lima to be highly dependent on mineral extraction, which has a political influence on the local decision-making process. The paper concludes with some considerations, both general and specific, about the possibilities and challenges of developing community-based ecotourism as an alternative to mining and of strengthening the local players in managing the territory.

Keywords: Coloniality of power; Neoextractivism; Environmental conflicts; Nova Lima; Ecotourism.

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São Paulo. Vol. 28, 2025

Enanppas 2023

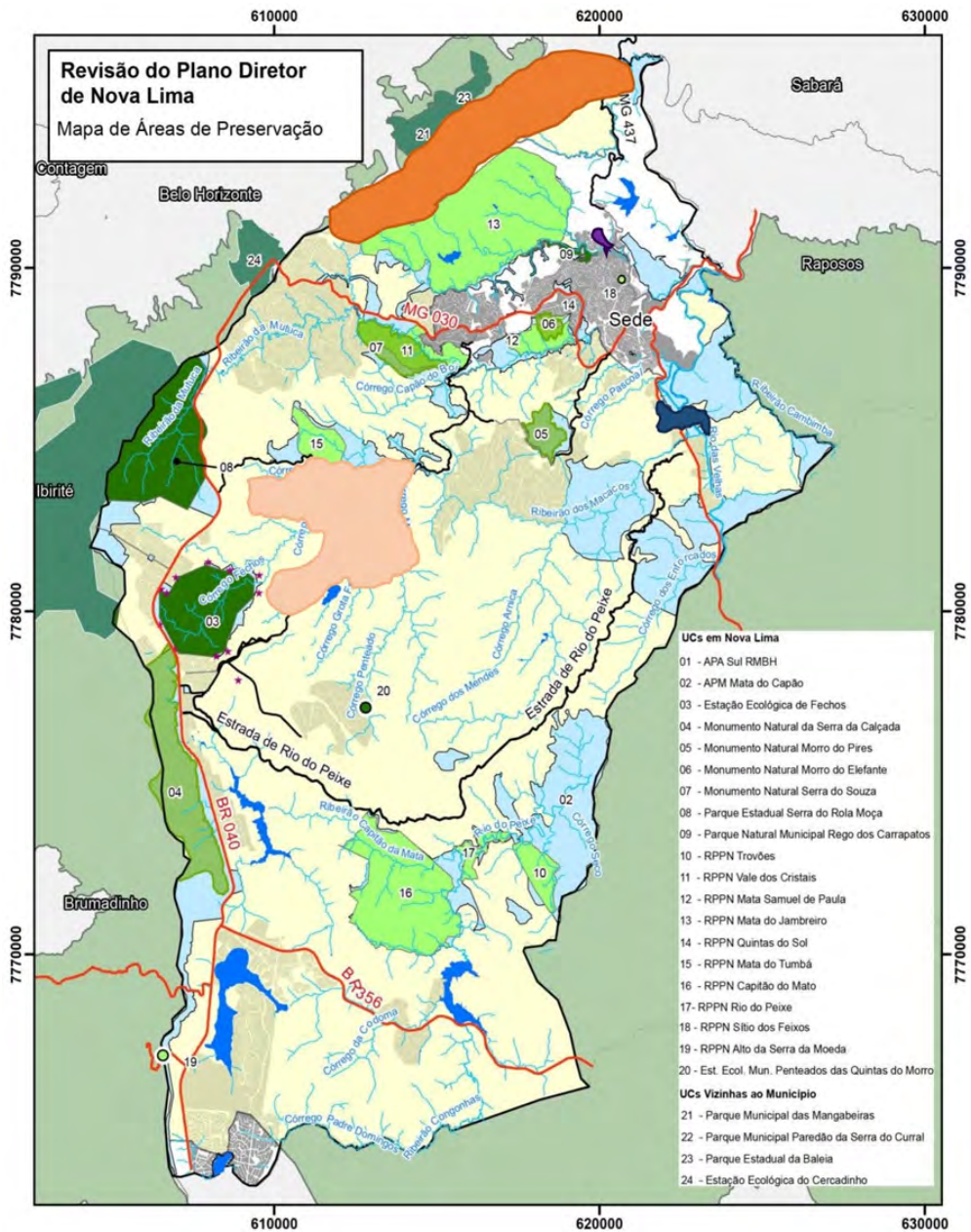
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/1809-4422asoc00212vu28L1FT>

Introduction

According to data of the Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute (IBGE, 2023), the municipality of Nova Lima has approximately 111,700 inhabitants and formed around early gold mines and later, the mining of iron ore. With an area of 419.313 km², divided into 71 sub-districts, it is located to the south of the Serra do Espinhaço range (Figure 1) in a region known as the *Quadrilátero Ferrífero* (Ferriferous Quadrilateral) (IBGE, 2023). Alves (2018) explains that *Quadrilátero Ferrífero* denominates a region of the State of Minas Gerais responsible for around 60% of Brazil's iron ore production.

The cities of Brumadinho and Mariana are located in the same region. They were the sites of the greatest Brazilian environmental crimes ever committed with the bursting of the Samarco and Vale S.A. mining companies' tailings containment dams that killed more than 300 people (LASCHEFSKI, 2020). Laschefski (2021) considers that the disaster governance systems imposed on the victims has led to the extinction of any actions directed at achieving effective change, thus perpetuating the routine violence.

Figure 1 – Map of Protected Areas.



Source: adapted from Curi (2019).

Legend

Revisão do Plano Diretor de Nova Lima Mapa de Áreas de Preservação Sede UCs em Nova Lima 01. APA Sul RMBH 02. APM Mata do Capão 03. Estação Ecológica de Fechos 04. Monumento Natural da Serra da Calçada 05. Monumento Natural Morro do Pires 06. Monumento Natural Morro do Elefante 07. Monumento Natural Serra do Souza 08. Parque Estadual Serra do Rola Moça 09. Parque Natural Municipal Rego dos Carrapatos 10. RPPN Trovões 11. RPPN Vale dos Cristais 12. RPPN Mata Samuel de Paula 13. RPPN Mata do Jambreiro 14. RPPN Quintas do Sol 15. RPPN Mata do Tumbá 16. RPPN Capitão do Mato 17. RPPN Rio do Peixe 18. RPPN Sítio dos Feixos 19. RPPN Alto da Serra da Moeda 20. Est. Ecol. Mun. Penteados das Quintas do Morro UCs Vizinhas ao Município 21. Parque Municipal das Mangabeiras 22. Parque Municipal Paredão da Serra do Curral 23. Parque Estadual da Baleia 24. Estação Ecológica do Cercadinho	Revised Version of the Nova Lima Urban Ordinance Master Plan Map of Protected Areas Municipal Headquarters PAs in Nova Lima 01. South Belo Horizonte Environment Protected Area 02. Mata do Capão Springs and Headwaters Protected Area 03. Fechos Ecological Station 04. Serra da Calçada Natural Monument 05. Morro do Pires Natural Monument 06. Morro do Elefante Natural Monument 07. Serra do Souza Natural Monument 08. Serra do Rola Moça State Park 09. Rego dos Carrapatos Municipal Nature Park 10. Trovões Privately-owned Natural Heritage Reserve (PNHR) 11. Vale dos Cristais PNHR 12. Samuel de Paula Woods PNHR 13. Jambreiro Woods PNHR 14. Quintas do Sol PNHR 15. Mata do Tumbá PNHR 16. Capitão do Mato PNHR 17. Rio do Peixe PNHR 18. Sítio dos Feixos PNHR 19. Alto da Serra da Moeda PNHR 20. Penteados das Quintas do Morro Municipal Ecological Station Protected Areas Neighboring the Municipality 21. Mangabeiras Municipal Park 22. Paredão da Serra do Curral Municipal Park 23. Baleia State Park 24. Cercadinho Ecological Park.
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In regard to geologic and geomorphological aspects, Campos (2012) explains that the Nova Lima region is situated in the Serra da Moeda range of hills, which in turn is part of a set of hills that constitute the local mountainous environment. The Serra da Moeda takes in the municipalities of Lima, Ouro Preto, Moeda, Rio Acima, Congonhas, Itabirito, Belo Vale and Brumadinho all of which lie in the threatened Atlantic Forest and Cerrado biomes.

Historically, the city of Nova Lima itself has had an intimate relationship with the mining that has marked the trajectory of the region as a whole and sedimented the local

identity. Furthermore, up until this early part of this 21st century it has been subjected to the active role of interests related to mining exploitation (ALVES, 2018). Mineral ore mining constitutes the main local economic activity and Nova Lima is in fourth place among the Minas Gerais municipalities in terms of revenue stemming from Financial Compensation for Mining Exploitation (Compensação Financeira pela Exploração Mineral - CFEM) (ALVES, 2018), (BRASIL, 2023).

With the expansion of mining mega-ventures that began in the years 2000, as a result of the 'commodities consensus' (SVAMPA, 2013), Nova Lima began to experience the pressures and risks associated with that activity and with it the risk of the bursting of its tailings dams.

This article sets out to discuss alternatives to mining in the municipality of Nova Lima. The central hypothesis is that community-based (eco)tourism could become a contra-hegemonic activity in regard to the expansion of mining in the region. Accordingly, it endeavors to contribute to theoretical reflections in the field Latin American Ecology Policy and Tourism as well as to the social movements and public policies in related areas.

Methods

This article is based on a documental analysis and analysis of data obtained through the master's research '*O Sonho Acabou?: From Extractivism to Tourism, Conflicts and (Re)-Existences in the District of São Sebastião das Águas Claras/Macacos, in the Municipality of Nova Lima - Minas Gerais*' (Process nº 2162726 - Plataforma Brasil) carried out between March 2022 and January 2023. The analyses targeted records of the seven public meetings held from March to September 2022 which took place with the participation of: community leaders of the residents of the territory of São Sebastião das Águas Claras/Macacos, the Vale S.A. company, the Office of the Public Prosecutor of the State of Minas Gerais (*Ministério Público de Minas Gerais* - MPMG) and the Municipal Authority of Nova Lima. The purpose of the meetings was to meet the demands of traditional societies in regard to the risk of the bursting of mining waste containment dams. The meetings were held in a virtual environment employing the Microsoft Teams software tool and an invitation/link supplied by the MPMG.

According to Cellard (2008) 'document' means any written text, in manuscript or printed form, that duly registers and validates facts or events. Lüdke and André (1986) state that documental analysis can be considered as a methodological process of document study that seeks to identify factual data in order to retrieve social, economic, and ecological circumstances they may be related to, restricting the search to the respective questions of interest. In that sense, documental analysis "is characterized by the search for information in documents that have not received any scientific treatment such as formal reports, newspaper reports, magazines, letters, films, recordings, photographs, among other publicizing materials" (OLIVEIRA, 2007, p. 69).

This research used the participant observation method to analyze the empirical data in four distinct situations: (i) the public meetings described in the first paragraph of this section and held in the period from March to September 2022; (ii) the field activi-

ties undertaken in May 2022 and from September to December, 2022; (iii) public hearings: the first took place on May 19, 2022 on the initiative of the Nova Lima Municipal Legislative Council and with a view to discussing the impacts of mining activities in the Serra do Curral range; the second public hearing was held by the Nova Lima Municipal Council and the Anglo Gold Ashanti mining corporation on December 12, 2022, to debate the revitalization of the industrial area where the Minha Velha and Mina Grande mining plants had formerly operated; (iv) workshops for restructuring the Municipality's Urban Ordinance Master Plan and the Municipal Tourism Plans: there were two such events, the first on May 14, 2022 in the São Sebastião das Águas Claras/Macacos and the second on November 11, 2022 at the Nova Lima Trade Association (Associação Comercial de Nova Lima).

The work of investigating and reflecting on society and cultures gives us access to a new dimension of scientific investigation (VELHO, 1978). Combessie (2004), holds that observation is linked to discovery; the researcher establishes a relationship that is multi-dimensional and relatively long-term with a human association, in its natural situation, for the purpose of developing a scientific understanding of that group (MAY, 2001) its objective being to apprehend the implicit and explicit aspects of the studied community.

Results and Discussion

Neoextractivism

The cultural history of extractivism in Minas Gerais from the 17th to the 18th centuries was based on the disorderly extraction of mineral resources. Recent studies have shown how the extractivism model that the respective mega-ventures adopt has social and environmental expropriation aspects that engender potentially degrading effects and conflicts in the territories.

Neoextractivism is a highly intensive and large-scale type of extraction of natural elements destined for exportation with little or no processing (GUDYNAS, 2016). The processes that stem from mining activities generate multiple forms of violence that are imposed on the territory of the communities (GUDYNAS, 2016) and are characterized by social and environmental expropriation (ARÁOZ, 2020).

Aráoz (2013) considers violence an important characteristic in perpetuating the colonial order that became institutionalized in modernity, stemming from three historical cycles: (i) the imposed violence that decimated autochthon peoples; (ii) the violence of territorial-bodily expropriation; and (iii) the naturalized violence of the adoration of the desire for goods. This last acted in the regulation of social life, emotions, and feelings in the colonial era.

Neoextractivism is understood to be merely a new guise for the violence cycles in a configuration that Quijano (2002) refers to as the coloniality of power. The coloniality of power concept/matrix is comprised of various power-imposed layers that have persisted into post-colonialism (QUIJANO, 1992).

In that sense, the coloniality of knowledge and of being emerge to complement that

critical perspective. Quijano (2005) considers that, in the long run, the colonial process gave rise to a colonization of knowledge processes, of the forms and models of generating and producing results and with the effects of coloniality being experienced by subaltern subjects categorized as inferiors (MIGNOLO, 2006; MALDONADO-TORRES, 2007; 2008). Recurrent in that process is the naturalization of physical and symbolic violence (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2008).

In the territories where large-scale projects are installed, coloniality creates ‘sacrifice zones’ (ZHOURI, 2023). Proximity to ventures that contaminate bodies and territories, such as iron ore mining waste retention dams, reproduce and intensify social inequalities and above all racial and gender-related ones (ACSELRAD, 2004).

Those inequalities particularly afflict low-income populations, provoking unwelcome compulsory migrations, silencing and violence, and affecting their health (VIÉGAS, 2006). As the exploitation of natural resources increases in the territories, the intensity of violence against them intensifies, fraying the thin social fabric that exists in the affected communities (COELHO et al., 2021). The impacts on such zones make them classifiable as territories of death authorized by the State in the name of development (CASTRO, 2019).

We offer a schematic summary of the research results (Charts 1 and 2) obtained from the territories encompassed by the research – São Sebastião das Águas Claras/Macacos, Serra do Curral, Mina de Morro Velho and Honório Bicalho – and register the locations of the various forms of violence identified in the discussion on neoextractivism in Latin America.

Chart 1 – Impacts and risks of mining companies.

Category	São Sebastião das Águas Claras / Macacos	Serra do Curral	Honório Bicalho	Morro Velho Mine
Company	VALE S.A.	VALE S.A.; Gute Sicht; Fleurs Mineração; Tamisa Mineração	AngloGold Ashanti (inactive mines)	AngloGold Ashanti -gold mine (inactive since 2003)
Impacts	Forced removals; harm to health; vegetation suppression; air and noise pollution; water resource contamination; interruption of local tourism; persecution of community leaders; damage to housing; weakening of communities; mining dependency.	Harm to health; vegetation suppression; air and noise pollution; water resource contamination; human rights violations.	Land use and occupation; water resource pollution from mining activities upstream from the communities.	Water table contamination; damage to housing.

Risks	Presence of retention dams at risk of bursting.	Presence of retention dams at risk of bursting; illegal iron ore extraction; water shortage for the population; influence trafficking.	Presence of retention dams at risk of bursting.; privatization and financialization of natural assets.	Privatization and financialization of natural assets; influence trafficking.
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Font: the authors, 2023.

Chart 2 – Actions of government and community.

Actors		São Sebastião das Águas Claras / Macacos	Serra do Curral	Honório Bicalho	Morro Velho Mine
Government bodies	MPMG	Partly favorable to the community	Favorable to the community	Neutral	Neutral
	Office of the Federal Public Prosecutor	Partly favorable to the community	Favorable to the community	Neutral	Neutral
	Minas Gerais House of Representatives	Partly favorable to the community	Partly favorable to the community	Neutral	Neutral
	Nova Lima Municipal Council	Partly favorable to community	Partly in favor of the community	Neutral	In favor of the mining company
	Judiciary Branch	Favorable to the community	Partly in favor of the community	Neutral	Neutral
	Municipal Executive Branch	Neutral	Favorable to mining	Favorable to mining / Favorable to the community	Favorable to mining
	State Executive Branch	Legitimator of mining	Favorable to mining / Legitimator of mining	Neutral	Favorable to mining

Community and Social Movements	Formation of the Macacos Commission by the community; strengthening of tourism-favoring actions; denunciation of human rights violations; consultation services of the universities for those affected; denunciation in the local, national and international media.	Report of human rights violations; denunciations on the local, national, and international media; denunciations in the State Parks and Environment Councils; requests for Public hearings; denunciations to the MPMG, MPF and the Minas Gerais legislative assembly.	Report in the social media, printed and digital newspapers of of the pollution of the Rio (river) das Velhas by the mining corporations; community training to receive tourists.	Part of the community together with Mab and the Pro-housing movement have questioned project's EIA/Rima; Request to the Nova Lima Municipal Council and the Minas Gerais Legislative Assembly for the holding of public hearings to discuss the Nova Vila (New Town) project.

Font: the authors, 2023.

The observed reality is consistent with the affirmation of Svampa (2012) and Quijano (2002) regarding the State’s legitimizing role in the mining corporation’s continuous use of violence in the process of expanding the dynamics of the enclave and forcibly displacing local subjects to another zone, the sacrifice zone. In this study, we add to that the role of various other public institutions that operate as legitimators of the mining corporations’ interests.

The five mining corporation this study identified, Vale S.A., AngloGold Ashanti, Fleurs Mineração, Tamisa Mineração and Gute Sicht, have implemented corporate actions that are typical of the neoextractivism model that has been consolidated in Latin America. To do so, they have taken advantage of the support and omission of public institutions in such a way as to achieve a territorial governance of their own choosing.

In the case of the Gute Schit and Fleurs mining companies with operations in the Serra do Curral range, for years both the State and Municipal executive branches have operated in favor of mining operations. An important example of that situation was the issuing of licenses to the two mining companies through their signing of Conduct Adjustment Agreements (*Termo de Ajustamento de Conduta – TCA*) drawn up by the State Executive branch represented by its Environment and Development Department.

The agreement enabled the mining companies to exploit iron ore in the Serra do Curral range without the need for environmental licensing and therefore, without conducting the respective Environmental Impact Studies (FIÚZA, 2022).

The two mining companies have accumulated dozens of environmental infractions and charges for operating in protected areas not authorized by the State government's Environment and Development Department. Those charges were made as a result of denunciations made to the MPMG, MPF, the State and Municipal Executive Branches, the Minas Gerais Legislative Assembly, the social networks, and social movements like 'Tira o Pé da Minha Serra' (Get your feet off my mountain) and denunciations by residents of the areas surrounding the ventures. In May 2023, the MPF suspended Gute Sicht's license and as of October 2023 the company is banned from operating in the Serra do Curral range.

After obtaining an operating license at a meeting at the State Environmental Policy Council's Chamber of Mineral Activities (*Câmara de Atividades Minerárias – CMI, do Conselho Estadual de Política Ambiental – COPAM*) that lasted for over twenty hours because of the various irregularities that were made known by civil society and social movements like 'Tira o Pé da Minha Serra', Movement for the Waters of Minas (*Movimento para as Águas de Minas - MOVSAM*), Movement of Those Affected by Dams (*Movimento dos Atingidos por Barragens - MAB*), the Tamisa Mineração company had its license to operate suspended by the Federal Justice Branch in August of 2023 due to the pressure from those social movements (PORTAL G1 MINAS, 2023).

In São Sebastião das Águas Claras/Macacos, the VALE S.A. mining corporation has performed in a similar way insofar as the rise in the levels of the B3/B4 dams in February 2019 just days after the Brumadinho disaster that took over 270 lives meant people in the vicinity were subjected to a forced removal. Hundreds of residents had to leave their homes immediately, leaving all their belongings behind. They were provided accommodation in the city of Belo Horizonte, that is to say, around thirty kilometers from their residences (PIMENTEL, 2019). In that regard, those affected have been denouncing human rights violations in the territory for more than four years. Even though the Offices of the Federal and State Public Prosecutors, the Offices of the Federal and State Public Defenders, and the Municipal and State Executive Branches have acted in favor of the community, it can be seen that a certain legitimacy has been attributed that favors the mining corporations. An analysis of the agreement signed between those institutions and the Vale. S.A. corporation in December 2022 in which those affected by operations had no effective participation in the negotiation of their rights is sufficient to confirm that.

At the Morro Velho mine the direct interference of the AngloGold Ashanti mining company is clearly observable especially because the mining company owns both the land where the mines are located and the buildings with very old installations that the municipal historical heritage entity has placed under its protection. That being so, the population has no access to such spaces and their reintegration to the municipality for public use has been denied. In 2022, however, AngloGold Ashanti in a partnership with the Nova Lima municipal government and the Concreto LTDA construction company

proposed the reintegration of the Morro Velho mine area to society by means of Consorted Urban Occupation (*Ocupação Urbana Consorciada* - OUC) under the auspices of the New Town (Nova Vila) project. The project was intended to revitalize the area with the building of shops, sports areas, leisure areas, and new housing for approximately 2,000 people. The question of the project's viability has generated a lot of concern on the part of civil society which has called on the entrepreneurs to discuss it more broadly with society at large. Those responsible for the project, however, have managed to get the work approved in record time, especially by the departments of the Municipal and State Executive branches and with the practically unanimous approval of the Nova Lima Municipal Council. In September 2013, AngloGold Ashanti, the Concreto construction company, the Nova Lima Municipal Government, and the Minas Gerais State Government signed a protocol of intentions (ANGLOGOLD ASHANTI, 2023). That signing places the Nova Vila project on the State of Minas Gerais's list of priorities even though it has not been widely discussed with civil society at all.

In the Honório Bicalho district, albeit no gold mining activity is currently in progress, the community lives under the threat of the bursting of the dams that retain the deposits of gold and iron ore mining tailings located upstream from the district. The risk of dams bursting threatens the communities that live along the banks of the Das Velhas River (Rio das Velhas) and would lead to the flooding of the entire district and consequent forced evictions, loss of habitations, and of human and non-human lives.

In synthesis, the reality of the four territories can be considered as representative of Extractivism 4.0 which Laschefski (2020) considers to be similar to 'Colonelism' (power in the hands of local oligarchs) with the formation of indirect forms of government within the mining territories, promoting accumulation through eco-biopolitical expropriation and plundering that affects the ways of life and of being territorialized in the locations in question. Indirect governments are formed by local corporate strategies that commonly enable the processes of environmental injustice produced by large corporations, whose disproportionate power in relation to other actors tends to prevent fair accountability for the injustices and disasters imposed on the territories affected by mining activity (SAES et al., 2021).

Constructing alternatives

Nova Lima has a potential for diversifying community-based economic activities such as family agriculture, ecotourism, and gastronomic tourism (an artisanal beer and high gastronomy pole) and the sporting activity of mountain biking (PREFEITURA MUNICIPAL DE NOVA LIMA, 2020).

In the case of Nova Lima, among the alternatives to unfold whose economic effects have the local community as protagonists, ecotourism emerges as a contra-hegemonic and decolonial alternative insofar as it could produce social, economic, and environmental benefits. Vilani (2018, p. 628) states that "ecotourism should be studied, stimulated and practiced in its aspect as a phenomenon of rupture and resistance whose essence is to respect the time frames and cycles of nature and of traditional peoples and communities".

In that sense, in keeping with the discussion of Corbari et al. (2021), the research on community ecotourism in a reality of resistance to mining has produced dialogues among the traditional knowledge of those affected by the mining in Nova Lima, social movements like the Movement of Dam-affected people, the Get your feet off my Mountain movement, the Movement for Sovereignty of the People in Mining (*Movimento pela Soberania Popular na Mineração* - MAM), the Macacos People's Action Movement (*Ação Popular de Macacos* - APM), the Macacos Commission (*Comissão Macacos*) and the Movement for the Waters of Minas thus bringing together the respective scientific knowledge, especially in the field of Latin American Political Ecology, in order to critically analyze the socio-environmental conflicts in the municipality and contribute towards the improvement of local policies for the development of tourism activities.

In a context where mineral exploitation is finite, it is important to critically discuss other development models (CORBARI; FERREIRA, 2019; CORBARI et al., 2021; VILANI, 2018; VILANI et al., 2020). As it is devoid of accumulation interests and the predatory results of mass tourism, community-based ecotourism will not bring with it the harmful consequence of displacing large groups of people (VILANI et al., 2020) and could constitute a driver of social transformation (CORBARI; FERREIRA, 2019).

The four regions referred to in the text have attractions where ecotourism already occurs or where it could be developed. In the region of the São Sebastião das Águas Claras/Macacos district, nature tourism is duly recognized and carried out and it can count on around 25 small inns (bed and breakfast) and 22 restaurants. Furthermore, it is neighboured by two protected areas: (i) the Rola Moça State Park (the third most visited in Minas Gerais); and (ii) the Serra da Calçada Natural Monument.

As they have structured and signed trails, all the PAs are well frequented by hikers and cyclists (PORTAL MACACOS, 2023). The region abounds in trails such as the Perdidas trail, declared a protected heritage by Municipal Decree n. 6.773, dated February 18, 2016. According to local residents, tourism in the region began in the early 1980s with the Motocross movement, and from then on tourism consolidated itself in Macacos as the residents' main source of income as they are entrepreneurs of that segment, driving the local economy.

The Serra do Curral has trails that link Nova Lima and Belo Horizonte. Various trails make connections among the Mangabeiras Municipal Park, the Da Baleia State Forest Park and the Serra do Curral Municipal Park. Those pathways were made by enslaved negroes working in gold mining. A lot of the way is through the Mata do Jambreiro which is a privately owned nature reserve (RPPN) belonging to the Vale mining corporation (Vale S.A.) (PREFEITURA MUNICIPAL DE NOVA LIMA, 2021).

In the central region of Nova Lima is located the old mining plant of the Morro Velho mine, the deepest gold mine in Brazil. Beside the plant area is the Rego dos Carapatos Municipal Park, which is connected to the Boa Vista and Mingu neighborhoods, entry points for the trails that lead to the Serra do Curral. There is a study of the Ferriferous Quadrilateral Geopark (Geoparque do Quadrilátero Ferrífero) that classifies that area as one of great importance for Brazilian archeology (RUCHKYS, 2009) and the

municipality's Cultural and Historical Assets Department has registered the entire area as a heritage area with great potential for developing geo-tourism. Tourism in the area around the mine plant is currently conducted by local guides, mostly residents of the Boa Vista and Mingu neighborhoods.

The Honório Bicalho region is the gateway to the Serra do Gandarela National Park. With its many waterfalls, this region is a very popular ecotourism destination. Its trails lead to more than 10 waterfalls in surrounding areas and there is also the Rio das Velhas Park Trail, over 30km long. This last trail is considered to be an ecotourism corridor intended to foster regular sustainable activities for the conservation of gallery forest formation. The 1.6 km long Estrada Real (Royal Road) is another important trajectory for developing tourism in the region and is thought to be Brazil's longest tourism route (INSTITUTO ESTRADA REAL, 2021). Tourists appreciate the district as a place for ecotourism and to practice sports in a natural setting. The current municipal authority has invested in actions such as: i) courses in household accommodation that promote community-based ecotourism in the region based on the premise of a protagonist role for the local community in the development of tourism activities; ii) a trail signing project for the Matozinhos Sanctuary and the Cruzeiro da Boa Vista; iii) traditional festivals that boost the region's manioc producers; and iv) qualifying local guides (PREFEITURA MUNICIPAL DE NOVA LIMA, 2023).

Nova Lima has a Municipal Ecotourism Plan created in 2011 and embracing various actions such as strengthening local communities, promoting inclusive tourism, and elaborating sustainable tourism development projects (NOVA LIMA, 2013). The Municipality also has the decree n. 6.773 issued on February 18, 2016, that created the Trails Project and decreed the registration and protection of 300 km of trails traditionally used for cycling and ecotourism activities (NOVA LIMA, 2016).

Vilani et al. (2020; 2023) consider that the Latin American Political Ecology approach should be emphasized in the analysis of alternatives to mining because, in Brazil, the impacts of the raw materials exportation pattern have not led to any social development or to extending the protection of nature. To that end, we evoke the relations between tourism and education.

Durkheim (1975) held that the educative process is one of socialization of individuals. Through social interaction, values inherent to the social group circulate and are introjected and passed on from generation to generation. That Durkheimian concept of education could be interpreted as culture and understood here to be the transmission of social norms and values from one generation to another and that vision is broad enough to encompass educative processes that are constituted in formal, non-formal and informal spaces. In that sense, given that tourism activity manifests itself in the encounters of cultures, it is an activity that can encompass forms of knowledge transmission and learning.

It is worth noting the potential the practice of tourism activities has for disseminating discourses. According to Fuller (2008) tourism can be considered to be a 'discursive machine' insofar as it disseminates social representations through discourses. In that line of thinking, tourism finds itself among the non-formal educative processes and that,

together with its ability to communicate discourses makes it an instrument for disseminating world visions.

From the above, by presenting tourism's social function, it can be argued that when elaborated from Latin American Political Ecology perspective, tourism activity can be inserted in the mining context for educational ends and as a means to mitigating hegemonic narratives. That being so, it is worth discussing how, and to what extent tourism could replace or diminish the local mining activity.

When considering tourism as a strategy to face mining and placing that activity as just one among other alternatives to be thought about, it must be stressed that we are proposing a specific tourism practice among the numerous segments that make up the tourism market, namely Ecotourism. It is taken here to be a notion apart from the preconceived concepts that not only display the marketing aspect of the activity but also define it as a practice detached from the social and cultural realities of the communities, failing to aggregate any educational dimension, and favoring experiences in which nature is merely an object of consumption. The notion of Ecotourism being put forward here is one that perceives the natural space as an asset: it involves adopting the educative process of valuing nature as a human heritage asset and, finally, of publicizing those values, turning them into symbolic capital.

The proposed reflection underscores how tourism could be an activity to replace or diminish local mining activity and we would agree that it is a reflection most strongly directed at diminishing the power of the mining activity. However, the question regarding the extent to which it could replace the mining activity calls for the introduction of a new point in the present reflection.

Segato (2013; 2012; 2006) allies herself with a critical perspective of coloniality and argues in favor of an Anthropology directed at the demands of the subjects, which, in a classic approach, would be deemed study objects. Based on that conception, the proposal for a demand-oriented tourism is directed towards a project in consonance with the demands of the groups located in sacrifice zones to enable the confrontation of colonizing, hegemonic projects. The demands of those groups would provide the outline of strategies for visibility and the production of discourse that the tourism activity would cause to circulate and which, in the case of Nova Lima, seems to fall within the scope of the Ecotourism notion precisely because it is the term that the residents use, and which is present in the Management Plans of the region's Protected Areas. Lastly, it must be underscored that despite the economic appeal that justifies the archaic practices of extractivism, what is actually at stake is a different relationship with the territory, with the natural heritage and the local culture; elements that should set the tone of projects of/for the future. Thus, tourism is not treated here as an activity to supplant mining in the economic sphere, but rather, to take advantage of an activity which, albeit endowed with an economic aspect has the potential to confront a logic that denies that community; it is a project of/for the future.

The Municipality is currently engaged in constructing the Municipal Tourism Plan and at the same time, revising the Urban Ordinance Master Plan (PREFEITURA

MUNICIPAL DE NOVA LIMA, 2022). Those two instruments are of great importance for consolidating Ecotourism development in the region, especially because they have enjoyed broad participation of the social movements and the local populations in the workshops held to discuss the implementation of those public policies.

Another important factor for tourism development, especially for the São Sebastião das Águas Claras/Macacos region, so highly impacted by the mining activities, is the Reparation Agreement signed in December 2022. To prioritize ecotourism in the region, a total amount of 3 million Brazilian Reals was set aside for the development and revitalization of trails (MINISTÉRIO PÚBLICO DE MINAS GERAIS, 2023). Even though the affected local residents had no participation in the decision-making that led to the agreement on reparation of 500 million reals, local residents organized themselves to form the Macacos Commission for the purpose of monitoring the destination of the amounts assigned to the district, given that the São Sebastião das Águas Claras/Macacos district is considered a tourism region and that the livelihood of 80% of the residents stems from that activity (TAVARES; MACHADO, 2020).

Thus, it can be concluded that the municipality of Nova Lima continues to be highly dependent on mineral extraction activity. Insofar as that activity controls a considerable part of the terrain in the municipality, it is necessary to seek for contra-hegemonic alternatives (CORBARI; FERREIRA, 2019). In that regard, (eco)tourism could be a way out that offers local inhabitants the possibility of autonomy not only for local economic development but also autonomy to manage their own territory themselves.

Nevertheless, the union of the extant social movements in that locality is necessary to enable them to occupy spaces of power and decision-making, especially in the discussion of public policies that effectively address the interests of the population and not the wishes of the mining companies that expropriate the territories there.

Conclusions

The documental research and participant observation identified an expressive increase in mining activity in the municipality of Nova Lima. The activities are unfolded according to the logic of neoextractivism, intensifying conflicts in the affected communities and de-territorializing bodies and knowledge.

The Municipality of Nova Lima is effectively a sacrifice zone despite its various cultural and natural assets. The myth of modernity has constructed the discourse for the privatization of the territories. The process demonstrates the role of the State and use of public policies in favoring a violent, predatory and excluding development model. In that sense, the mining companies identified in the Municipality of Nova Lima engender a series of corporate strategies that transform the localities into Corporate Mining Territories thereby perpetuating the asymmetrical scale of the power relations and generating fear of new disasters (MAGNO et.al., 2023).

São Sebastião das Águas Claras/Macacos and Honório Bicalho in particular have played a role of resistance in the form of mobilizations and the construction of a differ-

ent image aligned with the preservation of the heritage assets and the visibility of the tourism phenomenon.

Thus, in the framework of Latin American Political Ecology, the proposed alternative to that development model is a critical, community-based (eco)tourism perspective that is contra-hegemonic and catalyser of a social transformation for the local communities.

As general reflections, the analyses led to the conclusions that:

- i) The economy of the municipality of Nova Lima is highly dependent on mining dependency;
- ii) The mining companies interfere in local politics to favor their interests;
- iii) The environmental crimes are irreversible, and the reparation measures are taken without any participation of the persons affected;
- iv) There is a need to fortify the implanted public policies for ecotourism as an alternative to the exportation of raw materials-type development in Nova Lima and to focus on the protagonist role of the local community.

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Submitted on: 26/02/2024

Accepted on: 28/08/2024
2025;28:e00021

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Alternativas à Mineração: passado, presente e futuro em Nova Lima, Minas Gerais, Brasil

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Resumo: O artigo tem por objetivo discutir alternativas à mineração no município de Nova Lima, especificamente no distrito de São Sebastião das Águas Claras/Macacos. Tem por hipótese central que o (eco) turismo de base comunitária pode se tornar uma atividade contra-hegemônica à expansão minerária na região. Dessa forma, procura trazer contribuições para reflexões teóricas no campo da Ecologia Política Latino-americana e do Turismo, bem como para os movimentos sociais e as políticas públicas das áreas afins. Para tanto, utilizou pesquisa bibliográfica, documental e observação participante. Foi identificado que o município de Nova Lima é altamente dependente da atividade de extração mineral que exerce influência política no processo decisório local. Conclui-se com considerações gerais e específicas, quanto às possibilidades e desafios de desenvolvimento, do ecoturismo de base comunitária como alternativa à mineração e fortalecimento do protagonismo local na gestão do território.

Palavras-chave: Colonialidade do poder; Neoextrativismo; Conflitos ambientais; Nova Lima; Ecoturismo.

São Paulo. Vol. 28, 2025

Enanppas 2023

Alternativas a la minería: pasado, presente y futuro en Nova Lima, Estado de Minas Gerais, Brasil

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Resumen: El artículo pretende discutir las alternativas a la minería en el municipio de Nova Lima, estado de Minas Gerais, Brasil, concretamente en el distrito de São Sebastião das Águas Claras/Macacos. Así, el trabajo pretende aportar contribuciones a las reflexiones teóricas en el campo de la Ecología Política Latinoamericana y del Turismo, al igual que a los movimientos sociales y a las políticas públicas en áreas afines. Para ello, se recurrió a la investigación bibliográfica, documental y a la observación participante. Se ha constatado que el municipio de Nova Lima depende en gran medida de la actividad de extracción minera, la cual influye políticamente en el proceso local de toma de decisiones. Como conclusión del estudio, se plantean consideraciones generales y específicas sobre posibilidades y desafíos de desarrollo del ecoturismo comunitario como alternativa a la minería y fortalecimiento del protagonismo local en la gestión del territorio.

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Palabras-clave: Colonialidad del poder; Neoextractivismo; Conflictos ambientales; Nova Lima; Ecoturismo.