

Conflicts of Interest over the Use of Mineral Waters: A Study in Cambuquira - Minas Gerais

Conflitos de Interesses pelo Uso das Águas Minerais: um Estudo em Cambuquira – Minas Gerais

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Abstract

In Brazil, the towns belonging to the Water Circuit situated in the south of Minas Gerais are mineral water references. However, they are marked by the conflicts that involve the use, the exploration and the management of the mineral waters. In this context, the objective was to understand the mobilized interests regarding the use of mineral waters in the municipality of Cambuquira (MG). In addition to the discussions on the conflicts concerning mineral waters in Brazil, the different interests around the uses of mineral waters were discussed. For the qualitative study, documental research, observation and application of Emancipatory Participative Rapid Appraisal (EPRA) were used. For the analyses, the following analytical categories were used: private, state public and non-state public interest, identifying the actors, the uses related to each one of these interests and the manifested conflicts between them. It was possible to identify two central logics in conflict: water as commonwealth and as a human right should be accessible to all (in spite of the disagreements, such concepts are also related to the tourism issue and crenotherapy) and, on the other hand, water as a product and commodity – that results in the focus of commercial exploitation. The study concludes by pointing out the difficulties and possibilities of shared management of mineral waters that

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considers the multiplicity of uses and offers tools for mediation and resolution of conflicts of interests.

keywords: Conflicts over Water. Conflicts of Interest. Mineral Waters. EPRA.

Resumo

No Brasil, como referência em águas minerais, estão as cidades pertencentes ao Circuito das Águas localizadas ao sul de Minas Gerais. Todavia, esses municípios são marcados por conflitos que envolvem o uso, a exploração e a gestão das águas minerais. Nesse contexto, este estudo objetivou compreender os interesses mobilizados em torno dos usos das águas minerais no município de Cambuquira (MG). Além das discussões sobre os conflitos envolvendo águas minerais no Brasil, discutiu-se os diferentes interesses existentes em torno dos usos das águas minerais. Para o estudo qualitativo, realizou-se pesquisa documental, observação e aplicação do Diagnóstico Rápido Participativo Emancipador (DRPE). Para as análises, as seguintes categorias analíticas foram utilizadas: os interesses privado, público estatal e público não estatal, identificando os atores, os usos relacionados a cada um desses interesses e os conflitos manifestos entre eles. Foi possível diagnosticar que existem duas lógicas centrais em conflito: água como bem público e direito humano, devendo ser acessível a todos (apesar das divergências, essas concepções se relacionam, também, com a questão turística e a crenoterapia), e, por outro lado, a água como mercadoria e *commodity* – que resulta no foco da exploração mercantil. Conclui-se o estudo apontando as dificuldades e possibilidades de uma gestão compartilhada das águas minerais que considere a multiplicidade de usos e ofereça instrumentos para a mediação e resolução dos conflitos de interesses.

Palavras-Chave: Conflitos pelas Águas. Conflitos de Interesses. Águas Minerais. DRPE.

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1 Introduction

In Brazil, the reference to mineral waters is directly associated with the towns belonging to the Water Circuit situated in the south of Minas Gerais, a region that is well-known for its mineral water resorts. They are towns that have mineral waters which are considered important for the quality of life due to their characteristics, properties, medicinal effects and cultural and tourist importance (Alcântara, 2018; Bueno, 2017). These areas are distinguished by the existence of mineral water sources which offer alternative health treatments and attract tourists and companies interested in the exploration of these mineral waters.

Such possibilities, the great driving force of the multiple conflicts, are the ones that involve mineral waters, precisely of their use, exploration and

management. For Alcântara, Sant'anna and Pereira (2018, p. 10), the Water Circuit of Minas Gerais is an area of disputes among the different practices of “management, exploration and use of mineral waters: exploration, medicinal use, tourist activities, preservation, common use, privatization, degradation, unsustainable use practices, among others”. From the author’s perspective, these conflicts develop around different interests in the mineral waters, specifically concerning private, state and non-state public interests.

According to Costa, Guarido Filho and Gonçalves (2013), regarding the waters, the communities and the State (from the point of view of the legislation) converge towards considering water as commonwealth, and the market considers it an economic good; some State rules lean to this aspect as well. Thus, the conflicts of interests are latent, especially among the views of water as commonwealth and as an economic good.

As an experience of such perspective, we can mention the case of mineral waters from São Lourenço that had its sources explored by Nestlé Water company, generating several conflicts in the municipality (Cruz, 2017). As we can observe in Alcântara, Sant'anna and Pereira (2018, p. 2) “the conflicts concerning the waters involve issues such as human rights, the coloniality of nature, the multinational performance in the market logic, and also the economic valuation of waters to the detriment of cultural, social and environmental issues”. These are conflicts which are part of different regions in Brazil, including the municipality of Cambuquira, Minas Gerais.

Cambuquira has one of the best mineral waters of the planet (Sales, 2017) and it was awarded the title of *Blue Community* in 2014, becoming the first Blue Town of South America. This title is granted by the Canadian civil organization, *The Council of Canadians*, as a way of recognizing the places which make a balanced and rational use of their water resources (The Council Of Canadians, 2017).

In view of the multiplicity of interests that involve the mineral waters of Cambuquira and the great relevance of this place for the international and national contexts, the present paper aims to understand the mobilized

interests regarding the uses of the mineral waters in the municipality of Cambuquira, Minas Gerais. For this purpose, the interests from the perspective of private, state and non-state public sectors will be described, aligned with the uses and purposes of mineral waters. The actors involved in the interests and uses of mineral waters will also be identified.

2 Theoretical Discussion

2.1 Interests in the Mineral Waters

Due to its exclusivities, intrinsic characteristics and the several interests that permeate some mineral commodities, the mineral water has become one of the most valued mineral commodities. The interest is related to the research, to the mining and to the use for several purposes, such as cooking, industry, beauty and medicinal treatments.

Due to its multiple purposes, we consider the mineral water as a mineral commodity – as much as this framework is questioned (Alcântara, 2018) – that acquires social and economic importance, requiring a policy which includes the interests of mining, preservation, maintenance and management from the public administration.

Regarding the mineral water, it is conceptualized by the Mineral Water Code, Decree-Law n° 7.841, 08th August 1945, Article 1, as being “those from natural sources or from artificial sources that have chemical composition or physical properties or physical and chemical ones distinct from common waters, with characteristics that give them a medicinal effect”.

These waters are distinguished by the low cost of investment, a factor which contributes for the growth of the bottled water industry, apparently presenting low risk in its investment (Cruz, 2017). However, as another striking characteristic of mineral waters, it is pointed out that many of them, in addition to the medicinal effects, represent a historical and cultural symbol of the towns where they are situated in (Alcântara, 2018),

having different and conflicting interests around them, derived from the private, public and non-state public sectors.

In relation to the private interest, it is notorious that the water commodification and privatization are intensifying (Swyngedouw, 2007). Even by considering the fact that the water is recognized as a fundamental human right, the large corporations that trade the water insistently work so that it is recognized as a need to be provided by the private initiative and incorporated by the mercantile logic (Barlow, 2009). Hence, they use strategies to sell their products, by labeling the bottled waters to have more flavor and to be cleaner, among other strategies.

It happens that there is an interest in the commodification of the waters. For Misoczky, Flores and Bohm (2008), such conception is a process marked by the “exchange value” to the detriment of the “use value”, by the perspective of instrumental rationality instead of environmental.

. . . water and nature in general are appropriate for the production of values-of-use in processo that also produce value (in form of value-of-exchange). The two processes, despite being the same, are antagonistic. This raises a series of questions, since the main one is that the purpose of nature appropriation is no longer the production of values-of-use and it becomes the production of values-of exchange. (Flores & Misoczky, 2015, p. 240).

In the case of mineral water, the bottling process became a generalized enterprise mediated by large companies (Wilk, 2006). This process marks the mercantilization of mineral waters under a prism of “goods”. This logic also appears in the state interest that conceives the mineral water as an “ore” to be explored.

As to the market perspective, Brei and Böhm (2014) showed how the companies use different strategies of “social responsibility” in order to attract the consumer for the purchase of bottled water. This way, the consumers are increasingly opting for mineral water (Wilk, 2006) and they ignore the different conflicts which involve the exploration of these waters (Alcântara, 2018). Finally, Lobato, Mafra and Fontoura (2015) show that the

State and the media are aligned to the economic interests of the mineral water market.

From the perspective of the non-state public interest, there is the civil society sphere, which acts in favor of the defense of these waters by identifying its non-commercial use. According to this conception, we step into the conceptualization of mineral water as a public property (Cruz, 2017). This recognition results from the constant interaction between society and natural resources. Ruscheinsky (2004) states that this integration reflects the idea that the access to water by all persons may reduce inequalities among them, by attributing to the water one more justification for its classification as commonwealth – in the case of this paper, we have broadened for the mineral waters.

In face of the main interests surrounding the mineral water issues, we can understand them from the uses and from the relationships which the actors involved in the conflict attribute to the issues/. The use does not discriminate the quantity of the related actors, but it delimits the interest that predominates in its use and purpose. In Cambuquira; it is not different; its waters are permeated by antagonisms regarding its use and the involved actors. Thus, in face of this scenario, the identification of the uses and the involved actors from the point of view of the predominant interests is appropriate.

3 Methodological Procedures

The paper follows a qualitative and descriptive approach for emphasizing the connection among the testimonials, discourse and contexts in which the actors are inserted (Godoy, 1995). As previously mentioned, the research locus is the municipality of Cambuquira – Minas Gerais.

This municipality belongs to the Water Circuit of Minas Gerais and it has its mineral waters classified as one of the best (Cruz, 2017). Due to the great importance of these mineral waters for Cambuquira, the choice of the municipality as the research locus is justified – in addition to the existence

of a set of conflicts involving the exploration of these waters in this area and in the region (Alcântara, 2018). These conflicts involve the State, private companies and organizations from civil society (Cruz, 2017).

Technique	Contributions for the study
Documental research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To understand the social and historical context of Cambuquira; 2. To identify actors interested in mineral waters; 3. To describe several existing conflicts for the mineral waters; 4. To identify different interests in the analysed texts.
Observation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To observe mobilizations of organizations in the civil society; 2. To identify actors with greater power of influence; 3. To describe the relationships between NGOs and Public Power; 4. To follow conflicts of interests for the waters <i>in loco</i>.
EPRA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To contribute for the debate concerning mineral waters; 2. To provide a reflection environment on the conflicts for the waters; 3. To mobilize and debate diverging interests concerning the waters; 4. To identify the relationships of interests between actors and organizations.

Figure 1. Techniques and contribution for the study

As to its sources, this paper is carried out by means of primary and secondary data. In order to guarantee authenticity, multiple sources of evidence which complement one another were used, as follows: (i) Documental Research; (ii) Observation and (iii) Emancipatory Participative Rapid Appraisal – EPRA (*Diagnóstico Rápido Participativo Emancipador – DRPE*). Figure 1 helps the understanding of the used techniques and the contributions for the present study.

In the Documental Research, we analysed the news of local newspapers, such as Encontro – Cambuquira newspaper, as well as gazettes which linked information on the municipality, the NGO Nova Cambuquira and the City Council minutes of meetings, institutional publications and the municipal library collection. Altogether, current and historical documents that mention the municipality were analysed; around a hundred newspapers articles, three books which narrate town stories, around fifteen institutional publications that mention Cambuquira and other documents found in the library. Concerning the Observation, the researchers could

participate as listeners in official events, in Nova Cambuquira NGO and in the City Hall meetings, in addition to visiting important tourist spots for the research in order to consequently analyse the conflicts, work toward perception and identify the interests of the local authors. In such a context, there was observation during four meetings of Nova Cambuquira NGO, two open events for the community for the water importance awareness and three meetings with the municipal public management, 67 pages of field notes being catalogued.

Finally, the methodology that provided another important collection of information and made a greater contact with the municipality possible, in terms of its management, population, touristic spots and social and historical context, was the Emancipatory Participative Rapid Appraisal (EPRA). The EPRA lasted for five days and it was developed with the members of the Nova Cambuquira organized civil society and with the local residents.

The EPRA is a praxeological method that aims to diagnose reality and it has qualitative nature. The EPRA emancipatory nature establishes itself in three moments of a single and articulated movement, i.e.: reality expression and description; criticism of expressed material; and creativity (Pereira, 2017; Teixeira et al., 2019). The EPRA has the dialogue as a fundamental characteristic for its development and the connection with the social change – in the case of its application concerning the issues and conflicts involving the mineral waters in Cambuquira.

The EPRA consists of various techniques that are developed from three to five days by the team who applied them (the three first authors of this paper belonged to this team), and that are adequate to the study object. In Cambuquira, the technique application lasted five days, from 16th January 2017 to 20th January 2017. On each day of the technique application, around two EPRA were developed. It was relevant, because it allowed understanding relevant information about the local issue, as well as debates on the mineral waters, their legislation, their uses and existing

conflicts. In addition, o EPRA made the dialogue among the different atcors present in the context of mineral waters of Cambuquira possible. The techniques stimulated the context understanding, positionings and discussions among the participants, by having the setting of the dialogical process as one of the special purposes of the method (Teixeira et al., 2019).

Thus, this research was carried out in a participatory manner between university and the active organizations from the civil society in the Water Circuit, with due emphasis to Nova Cambuquira NGO, situated in the study *locus* of this paper.

Subsequently, the data triangulation (Figure 2) was used to analyse the results. According to Yin (2014), the triangulation is related to the articulation of strategies and different evidence in a research. The triangulation, according to Flick (2009, p. 62), “should produce knowledge in different levels . . . and, thus, contribute to promoting the quality of the research”.

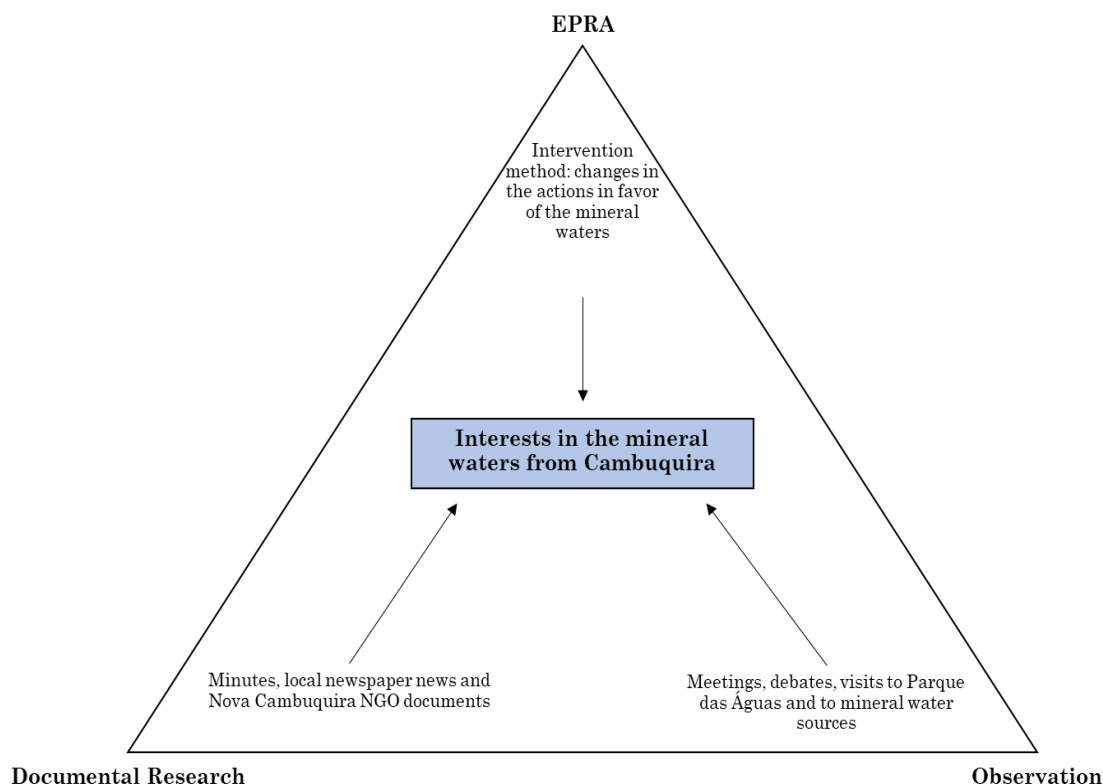


Figure 2. Triangulation process in the research

For data analysis, the following interests as categories of analysis were used: (a) private, (b) public and (c) non-state public, previously highlighted in this paper regarding the water issue. Such categories were chosen by means of the EPRA method, with the aid of the participants, being these categories considered as the most encouraging ones in the discussion during the data collection, i.e., how to manage the different interests (private, public and non-state public) and how to mediate the conflicts among them.

4 Analysis of the Results

4.1 The Therapeutical Use of the Mineral Waters and Tourism

The first discoveries of water natural sources in Brazil happened from the XVII and XVIII centuries on, and these had outstanding features that distinguished them from the traditional waters such as taste and sometimes a sharp odor. According to the EPRA participants, many towns that had the “differentiated” waters were visited due to such resources since that time. Later on, the water resorts were known all over Brazil after the discovery, being increasingly sought for recreation and/or for health treatments (Sales, 2013).

The visits to these municipalities started growing and the Health Tourism was gradually included in Cambuquira. According to the definition of the Ministry of Tourism (2009), the term health tourism refers to the Constitution “the tourist activities deriving from the use of means and services for medical, therapeutical and esthetical purposes”. This activity reached its peak in the first half of the XIX century, when according to Sales (2013), in the popular perception, the healing power of the mineral waters was as convict as the category of the depurative tonic: “They were perceived as . . . a kind of almost miraculous medication” (Sales, 2013, p. 42).

The medicinal power of the mineral waters from Cambuquira and from other water resources spread all over the world via newspapers and

magazines of that time which linked information on the benefits of the mineral waters: “Initially, specially in the XVII and XVIII centuries, the waters had its healing power evidenced by practical experiences and they were related to the religious world, considered as sacred and miraculous” (Schreck & Marques, 2019, p. 142). Thus, Souza (2019, p. 36) states: “Until the middle of the XX century, the tourism in Brazil was predominantly healing”.

In Cambuquira, the local sources offer various benefits for their users; for this reason, such information is shared and is available for all the visitors, by using pamphlets and information posters at the entrance of Parque das Águas – where the highest concentration of the municipality sources is situated. Within all the presented context, it can be said that the water is considered a symbolic component for the municipality, whose most significant benefit is its medicinal use for disease prevention and cure. Moreover, these waters are consumed for being considered cleaner and more pure than the others are (Oliveira, 2019).

Strong evidence of symbolic identification can be seen with the demonstration of a participant during the EPRA: “when Cambuquira is mentioned, the person immediately remembers the sparkling water source. . . I do not see Cambuquira without being associated to mineral water”. It is appropriate to highlight that the municipality sources receive visits from local residents as well as from visitors who precisely look for them because of their benefits.

During the visits to the sources, we had the opportunity to listen to testimonials and experience from the residents and from the visitors. In accordance with the developed techniques, it is appropriate to consider the argument support that the sources and their mineral waters became a strong cultural symbolic component in Cambuquira, mainly remembered by their healing power. While using the research techniques, the mineral waters were referred to as “waters that cure”, “precious waters”, “holy water”, “eye popping waters”, “miraculous waters from Cambuquira” and

“open sky drugstore”, which reinforces this medicinal significance of the waters.

The medicinal benefits of the mineral waters were the ones that provided the rise of the local tourism. But currently, tourism is not the great promoter of the local economy any longer, implying in its secondary position in the local economic transactions. Nowadays, it occurs due to the main local attractions, as follows: Parque das Águas, the Marimbeiro and Laranjal sources (in the town surroundings) and the Pico do Piripau, situated in the rural area.

Even though it has these touristic attractions, EPRA has captured that the cambuquirense society itself discredits the tourist future of Cambuquira, where many persons say that the town has no possibility of expressive growth and that the still existing low tourism occurs due to the mineral waters. While using the techniques, the disbelief as to the development or reactivation of local tourism was notorious, mainly as follows: “. . . Cambuquira has a small way out to grow” and “tourism in Cambuquira is in decline”. This issue has a historic context:

From the 1950's onwards, there was a gradual decline of tourist flow, due to the medical changes linked to the pharmaceutical industry and to the new tourist attraction centers in Brazil and in the world. As a result of this gradual change in the social and historical scenario there is a progressive reduction of the tourist flows of the Water Circuit, added to the lack of the water in-depth studies and the new tourist attraction offer in the region (Junqueira, 2019, p. 285).

No matter how noticeable the disbelief is, Nova Cambuquira NGO and other actors from civil society, as representatives of non-state public interest, look for alternatives in order to strengthen tourism (ecologic), either due to the medicinal power of the waters, to the natural beauty of Cambuquira or to other ecological factors. This willingness is expressed by Nova Cambuquira, which increasingly attracts the local society participation engaged in this cause, with the researchers and the activists in favor of the cause, aimed at having the water as commonwealth.

In a wider discussion on the waters, Flores and Misoczky (2015) argument:

. . . conception of water as commonwealth is shown in the struggle spaces, in the traditions and in the popular conceptions of the world. They are seeds that have not germinated yet because we have not experienced the historical conditions for such; because they are suffocated by the capital hegemony which expresses itself in practices such as manipulation of enormous water volume, in the allocation of money as a measure of value and in the naturalization of shortage (Flores & Misoczky, 2015, p. 247).

The organized civil society plays an important role within this context, as it defends the preservation and the consideration of the waters as commonwealth in its movements; its commercialization and exploration in an unsustainable way are not allowed; thus, they establish conflicts with state and private organizations that are in favor of the exploration of the sources.

4.2 The Commercial Use of the Mineral Waters

What attracts the market looks to Cambuquira waters is its recognition as excellent quality water, and this perspective of economic interests under the mineral waters is seen as problematic by part of the local population as the Nova Cambuquira NGO members do. Only one source is bottled and commercialized on the supermarket shelves in Brazil. Considered as “soft naturally sparkling water from Cambuquira”, according to reports of Cruz (2017), its sales started around 1981 and were commercialized by Supergasbrás company until 2001.

Until 2001, there were no reports from any formalized popular representative entity that was concerned with the water exploration from the preservation point of view and even the risk of its exhaustion. Thus, faced with the need to monitor and to protect the sources, Nova Cambuquira NGO came into existence in 2001 during the launching of the public notice for exploring mineral waters of the municipality, by mobilizing those who were already engaged in favor of the preservation and of the non-exploration

of the mineral water. Hence, they decided to unite themselves and to organise themselves in an association with the intention of banning some points of the notice that meant an exploration of the waters in a predatory way. Since then, Nova Cambuquira NGO and Cambuquira society members' action has always been present.

New notices of the water exploration were launched corroborating new conflicts caused by diverging interests in the mineral waters as in 2005 and in 2017. The main issue from the population was related to the water exploration, by arguing that the sources would reach exhaustion in a short time, causing harm to the local environment, tourism and economy. It was also possible to observe the Public Ministry of the Environment favorable action to the impediment of the notices.

During the period of such controversies, it is worth emphasizing that the bottling of the mineral water should be a secondary activity according to Nova Cambuquira NGO, because it does not offer expressive number of jobs and income and it also includes the possibility of losing the therapeutical value of the water with the bottling process.

With these obstacles established by the Public Ministry of the Environment and Nova Cambuquira NGO, the disputes for the water management were constantly increasing, new notices being subsequently launched, causing a struggle between organized civil society and the notices (enacted by the State).

During the EPRA technique, developed with Nova Cambuquira NGO members and other local participants, there were discourses that demonstrated that the water should be explored (in a sustainable way) as an income source for the municipality, implying in the disclosure of the name of the town and in the fostering of local tourism. In this context, it is relevant to stress that there are residents in Cambuquira who defend that the waters should be explored aiming only at benefits of social and economic nature; however, there are others who defend that even under the inspection of the public power and of the community these waters should not be explored.

The mineral water commercialization issue was the theme which caused a great deal of disagreements among the participants when addressed during the data collecting. While some of them were positive concerning the commercialization of the commodity, other persons were decisively against the water bottling process.

The research clearly stated that there are local persons who assume a favorable positioning as to the municipality mineral water exploration, moving away from the positioning of Nova Cambuquira organization: “In addition to the access for all, use (the water) as leverage of the economic development”, “. . . it is not monstrous to think of *commodity*, such thought may lift us from the economic stagnation” and “. . . we can not deprive from thinking of other uses [for the mineral waters]” (Local resident).

In this sense, some of the EPRA participants argued that the exploration for the commercialization emerges as a strategic possibility to rise the municipality of Cambuquira again mainly with tourism. For others, this is a clear view that the only possible belief to remove the municipality from its stagnation is to carry out the exploration of the waters, regardless of how this will be accomplished – a point of view that organizations of the civil society struggle against.

The legislation that rules the mineral waters states that they can be explored as any other ore, what implies in several debates and controversies about this issue. Nova Cambuquira NGO reveals itself as contrary to the mineral water exploration. They are contrary to the exploration which occurs in São Lourenço with the presence of the Nestlé (*Nestlé Waters*) multinational up to that moment.

According to the testimonials, it is noticeable that the majority of Cambuquira actors is not favorable to the water commercialization, even if it is strategically thought for benefits in favor of the municipality. We noticed that the fear concerning the sources exhaustion is stronger than the possibility of “rising” the town again. EPRA participants strongly highlighted the idea that the waters should not be explored with the intent

of obtaining economic gains for the municipality: the “. . . key problem is water as *commodity*” (NGO Member).

Therefore, Nova Cambuquira great challenge is to fight the thoughts that the water can be a *commodity* for the municipality, although the legislation itself does not ensure the care that should be taken when treating it as commodity. The National Department of Mineral Production (DNPM), current National Mining Agency (ANM), does not have legal support that aims at and/or determines important care concerning the mineral water exploration; sustainability is not among the priorities in mining. Regarding this aspect, Nova Cambuquira NGO great battle is the attempt to withdraw the mineral water from the Mining Code, as the water does not constitute itself as an ore for such actors but rather as commonwealth.

4.3 Multiple Interests in the Mineral Waters

The mineral waters from Cambuquira, as other mineral waters, can be seen from various perspectives: from the public sector, from the private sector and from the civil society point of view (from non-state public interest). With the conflict existence, it was clear that the population redefined the issue of the waters, mainly fearful that when they are explored for commercial purposes, they could lose their cultural essence and become a commodity ruled under the strategic point of view that sees only profit.

The organized civil society interest is mainly represented by Nova Cambuquira NGO, an entity of important relevance in the struggle in defense of the water as commonwealth. As to Nova Cambuquira and its relationship with the issues related to mineral water, it is notorious that this institution makes all the actions directed to mineral waters and other news involving the theme public.

The organization works strongly for the information publicity and the awareness that the water should be considered and ruled under the point of

view of commonwealth. The population engagement and participation in decisive issues on the mineral water sources (specially in 2001, in 2005 and in 2017) took place in hearings and public consultations, protests via social networks and face to face ones in the municipality, with Nova Cambuquira leadership.

The intention to commercialize the waters started with the first company which bottled Cambuquira waters in 1981, when studies about the sources used for exploration were carried out. From this period on, the waters already yielded financial benefits for the company and consequently promoted the local commerce and economy. The commercialization served inclusively the public power; however, as the years went by, this practice was redefined and the exploration is not desired any longer by several actors. Even with the possibility of improvements (such as the one in the recent public-private partnership) from the water commercialization, a significant part of the population wants the town to grow and to develop by means of the ecological tourism, of the water use for medicinal purposes and of other companies which do not explore the local waters in an unsustainable way.

Interest	Summary
Private interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic symbol • Water as an ore and as a commodity • Mineral water as food that has to be commercialized • Tourism
Public interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political symbol • Water as an ore • Economic development of the town • Tourism
Non-state public interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural symbol • Mineral water as commonwealth • Mineral water as source of treatments • Ecological tourism

Figure 3. Description of interests about the waters

Considering all the discussion raised by the present paper, it is relevant to establish some points for a better visualization of the actors and their representations regarding mineral waters (Figure 3).

Facing such reflections, it is possible to conclude that the civil society and other public institutions, such as the Public Ministry of the Environment, defend that the waters should follow the path of public property and commonwealth, remaining as a cultural symbol of Cambuquira and promoting local tourism for its sources and crenotherapeutic benefits in favor of the common well-being.

5 Final Considerations

The Water Circuit of Minas Gerais became a reference when it concerns mineral waters. The towns belonging to the Circuit, among them, Caxambu, Cambuquira, Lambari and São Lourenço are marked by multiple conflicts which involve both the use and exploration and its own management of mineral waters.

In such a context, this paper comprises the mobilized interests around the uses of the mineral waters in the municipality of Cambuquira, Minas Gerais. In addition to the discussions on the conflicts involving mineral waters in Brazil, the different existing interests (private, public and non-state public) around the uses of the mineral waters were discussed in the theoretical framework.

The study was conducted in Cambuquira, a municipality that integrates The Water Circuit of Minas Gerais and that has already had its waters considered as one of the best. As a way of recognizing the quality and the importance of these waters, the town was granted the *Blue Community* seal in 2014 for recognizing the water as human right, eliminating the bottled water sale in the facilities and in municipal events and promoting water services with public financing.

For the data collection, this paper used the data triangulation among documental research, observation and application of the Emancipatory

Participative Rapid Appraisal (EPRA). The interests were used as analytical categories: (a) private, (b) public and (c) non-state public for the analysis, identifying actors and uses related to each one and how conflicts exist among them.

Based on the private interest, the intention of companies to explore the mineral waters that are treated as commodity and product was identified. Concerning the state public interest, the action of the Economic Development Company of Minas Gerais (CODEMIG) and of the local public power was identified; nonetheless, these actors move their interests closer to the private one when they choose the mineral water bottling in an entrepreneurial model. Diverging from these models, the civil society organizations, researchers and activists mobilize in favor of a sustainable tourist, crenotherapeutic use of free access to mineral waters by the local population.

Based on this non-state public interest, the mineral water is considered as a cultural property, a medication and well-being. The Nova Cambuquira NGO and other actors of the local civil society were important in this research contribution because we obtained a great part of our data from them, by means of numerous visits to the local of the study and documents provided by this entity.

Nova Cambuquira is always in articulation with other bodies, such as the Public Ministry and the local Public Power looking for the implementation of the dialogue in order to defend and to protect the mineral waters and the sources, in addition to always being in constant contact with the local population, promoting public hearings, mobilizations in favor of the waters, educational actions with children and adolescents and the constant search to minimize commercial perspective under the sources of local mineral water.

It was possible to diagnose that there are two central approaches in conflict: water as public property and human right, and it should be accessible to all (in spite of the divergences, these conceptions also relate to

the tourist issue and to the crenotherapy), and, on the other hand, as a product and *commodity* – that results in the focus of the commercial exploration. The results show, inclusive, that the conflicts were judicialized by means of Public Class Action but they still persist up to the moment of this paper conclusion.

The main struggle of the civil society engaged in the mineral water cause of Cambuquira, Nova Cambuquira NGO, is related to a cultural change, in which the waters are valued and they are not merely seen as a product. Recently, there was an increase of social actors and an increase around the different issues of interest as a consequence, inducing more conflicts around the issue, as it is verified by Alcântara (2018).

As an agenda of future researches, we indicate studies that relate environmental governance to mineral waters in the public municipal, state and federal scopes, and moreover investigate (regional) the role of the organizations of the third sector in the power disputes around the waters in a broader way .

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