



Demographic pressure over the Environmental Protected Area of the Lagoa Santa Karst, Minas Gerais State, Brazil

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The State of Minas Gerais, Brazil, is approximately 586.528 km². From this total, it is believed that about 29,000 km²(Piló 1997; 1999) are composed by carbonatic rocks. With a total of 853 municipalities and some evident environmental problems, the biggest problem is the proper final waste disposal as noticed by Travassos *et al* (2008). This work is intended to demonstrate the potential degradation of karst scenarios due to the increasing urbanization in the so called "North Vector". There are two State Parks and six other Conservation Units in this region. Historically the cities near this region have been used as dormitory towns. Further north, various ranches, country houses for the weekend and rural hostels are set on karst terrains. The municipalities of Vespasiano, Pedro Leopoldo, Confins, Lagoa Santa, Matozinhos, Funilândia and Prudente de Moraes are within the 360 km²-large Environmental Protected Area of the Lagoa Santa Karst. All these municipalities have been facing demographic growth and consequently generate the anthropogenic pressure over the karst. Up to the date on which this abstract was written, the Decree n° 6640/2008, signed by the Brazilian government, is in effect. It substituted the previous one, Decree n° 99556/1990, which protected the Brazilian speleological heritage. According to the new Decree, now there are no warranties that caves will be protected against infra-structure constructions and mining companies. Besides, it also establishes relevance criteria that point out which caves which can be destroyed without any compensation at all. Certainly the speleological community is already mobilized against this new Decree.

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