

# **Minas Gerais as a Powerhouse for Afrotourism: Memory, Science, and Regeneration in Post-Extractive Territories**

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## **Introduction**

This paper examines the experience of **Mina Du Veloso**, located in the São Cristóvão district of Ouro Preto (Minas Gerais, Brazil), as an emblematic case of cultural, environmental, and symbolic regeneration in a historically mined territory. Situated within a landscape deeply shaped by eighteenth-century gold extraction and by the legacies of enslavement and coloniality, the initiative emerges as a community-driven practice capable of integrating Afro-descendant memory, citizen science, heritage education, and sustainability strategies. Mina Du Veloso contributes to the debate proposed by EcoLivre by demonstrating how local communities can develop cultural and environmental responses to contemporary climate and social crises.

## **Context and Theoretical Framework**

The experience is anchored in frameworks of Afrocentric heritage-making, community-based ecomuseology, social history of mining, and post-extractive governance, which understand that territories degraded by extractive activities may be symbolically reactivated through community agency, memory, and claims for historical justice. Its interpretive approach draws on hot interpretation methodologies, emphasizing affective experiences and sensitive relationships between visitors, territory, ancestry, and landscape.

The trajectory of Mina Du Veloso is also situated within the emerging field of Afrotourism, which proposes new narratives and visitation practices based on the recognition of Black technologies, knowledge systems, and presence. In this sense, Minas Gerais stands out as a privileged territory, given its mining past and the crucial role of African and Afro-Brazilian labor in the colonial gold economy.

## **Methodology**

The study adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach, integrating:

- a) participant observation in cultural, educational, and guided activities;
- b) document analysis of visit scripts, technical records, and institutional materials;
- c) systematization of scientific studies carried out at Mina Du Veloso, especially geotechnical and hydrological research on underground gallery behavior;
- d) community narratives and open interviews with actors engaged in the site's management.

This methodological triangulation enables an understanding of the project both as a cultural practice and as a community-based laboratory of applied research.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Reinterpreting the mined landscape

Mina Du Veloso reframes an extractive territory through Afrocentric narratives that reveal the agency of Black workers in eighteenth-century mining engineering, fostering critical learning about the interrelations between mining, colonization, and contemporary inequalities.

### 2. Applied research and climate adaptation

One of the project's most innovative dimensions is the continuous execution of studies on underground gallery behavior and water flow during rainy periods, employing measurements of infiltration, hydrostatic pressure, and internal water circulation. These data support:

- identification of structural risks;
- design of rainwater management strategies in mined areas;
- development of safety protocols;
- contributions to municipal public policy;
- climate adaptation strategies in historic urban areas.

This represents a rare integration of cultural heritage management, applied science, and geotechnical risk prevention.

### 3. Sociocultural and ecological impacts

The project generates impacts in several dimensions:

- **Cultural:** strengthening Afro-Mineiro memory, expanding official narratives on mining, and valuing community heritage.
- **Social:** youth training, intergenerational activities, cultural events (CineMina, capoeira, knowledge circles), and community-based income generation through Afrotourism.
- **Ecological:** reforestation of the surrounding area, rainwater management, monitoring of degraded zones, and reinforcement of environmental awareness.

## Final Considerations

The experience of Mina Du Veloso demonstrates that heritage and environmental regeneration processes can be led by local communities, even in contexts marked by institutional absence. The case illustrates the potential of Minas Gerais as a national reference in Afrotourism, articulating memory, science, and citizen participation.

Future perspectives include:

- expansion of Afrotourism routes throughout Minas Gerais;
- consolidation of a network of Afrocentric and post-extractive ecomuseums;
- deepening hydrological and geotechnical research;
- strengthening legal and political recognition of memory territories.

Mina Du Veloso demonstrates that regenerating post-extractive territories requires an integrated approach involving culture, memory, science, and community action—responding comprehensively to the challenges of the climate crisis.