

Origin and future of Global Geoparks

*Guy Martini¹

1. Reserve Géologique de Haute-Provence

Geoparks are in gestation for more than 30 years, appearing from the development and evolution of the geological site conservation conscience and from its recent heritage value consideration. An important milestone on the way to Geoparks was the adoption, in 1991, of the «International Declaration of the rights of the Earth memory »(Digne, France)..

In the years 1995-2000 meanwhile the Geoparks where in development in China under a concept of «Geological Park », Four territories in Europe (France, Greece, Germany, Spain) have developed an European program, in partnership with UNESCO to experiment the concept of Geopark as tool of sustainable development. This program has provided the bases of the Global Geoparks concept as territories presenting a geological heritage of an international value linked with the other territorial heritages (natural,cultural, intangible) and, where are implemented new strategies of integrate economical sustainable development.

In 2000, under the UNESCO auspices, is created the European Geopark Network (EGN) and due to the great succes of this young network, UNESCO launched in 2004, on the same concept, the Global Geopark Network (GGN). Very quickly this network expands all over the world to reach in 2015, 120 Geoparks inside 33 State Members of United Nations.

Considering the great success and the strong interest generated, all around the planet, by these territories their weakness was mainly located inside their «light »or unformal support provided by UNESCO. This is the reason why a solution was looked for a new and formal UNESCO strong involvement. Involvement which was finded throught the vote of IGGP program, in November 2015, By the UNESCO General Assembly transforming the previous Geoparks in official UNESCO Global Geopark program fully supported and managed by UNESCO in partnership with the Global Geopark Network Association.

This fundamental evolution without changing anything on the previous Geopark concept will have, therefore, some consequences on the procedures and on the designation process which will be done, in fine, by the UNESCO Executive Committee.

Thanks to this new UNESCO formal visibility, the Global Geopark Network will have in the future more responsibilities by strengthening within its members not only management quality but also communication, networking, methodologies, and common international cooperation.

Geoparks are the new territories of the XXI century where the memory of the Earth meet Mankind memory for a new integrated sustainable economy and they have a great future in front fo them.

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