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# Geomorphosites

## Research, protection and education

A Working Group of the International Association of Geomorphologists

Proposal for the period 2005 – 2009

### Introduction

The working group *Geomorphological Sites: research, assessment and improvement* was created in September 2001 at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Geomorphology held in Tokyo. It is chaired by Emmanuel Reynard, University of Lausanne, Switzerland. Secretary is currently Paola Coratza, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia (Italy).

This report is a proposal for continuing the activities of the working group during the period 2005-2009.

### Conclusions on the period 2001-2005

The activities and products of the working group during the four years period 2001-2005 are reported in the Final Report in appendix to this document. The **main improvements** concern the following aspects:

- **Improvement of the research community on geomorphosites.** At the moment the working group has a more international extension. Members come from 18 countries in Europe, North Africa, Asia, Australia and South America, even if some parts of the World, especially UK and North America, are still poorly involved in our activities.
- **Definitions, assessment and mapping methods.** Issues concerning the definition of geomorphosites, as well as the assessment and mapping methods have been discussed during the two workshops organized in Italy in

2002 and 2003. The original objective of the WG was to publish after four years guidelines for assessing and mapping geomorphological sites. The works have shown that it was not possible to propose general guidelines to be used by all the countries. The assessment of geosites and the choice of assessment methods depend drastically of the objectives and the context of the research; for this reason, we have abandoned the project of guidelines and concentrated the activities of the working group on the documentation of several available methods. The theme of geomorphological sites has also been included in the *Encyclopedia of Geomorphology* edited by A. Goudie and published by the IAG in 2003.

- **The inclusion of geomorphosite studies in university cursus.** Some universities had already courses on geosites, especially in Italy. During the period 2001-2005, geomorphosite studies have been included in several university programs both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
- **The relationships between geomorphosite studies and human sciences.** Several workshops, fieldtrip and conferences have demonstrated the opportunities to develop research at the interface between geomorphology and human sciences (archaeology, literature, arts, etc.).

## Proposals for the period 2005-2009

Starting from these observations on the activities 2001-2005 and the fact that geosites, geotourism and geoconservation are becoming very attractive research topics within the geoscientific community (see the number of topical sessions during the 32<sup>nd</sup> IGC in Florence last year), **we ask the IAG Executive Committee and General Assembly to authorise our WG to continue its activities during a new four years period (2005-2009).**

The fund raised by the IAG has allowed to begin an international coordination of activities (see Final Report) and lays the basis for the development of common projects funded by research foundations (European Union or others).

Moreover, the IAG supports the *EU Manifesto on Earth Heritage and Geodiversity* and the Working Group proposes itself as the IAG point of reference for any activity concerning the topics of Geoconservation and Geodiversity.

### Objectives

We propose the five following main objectives:

- **Assessment and mapping.** It is important to realise more *empirical studies* in various geomorphological contexts and to develop assessment and mapping methods. In this sense, it is crucial to develop *funded research* in order to finance time-consuming research and to publish more papers in international journals. We propose to focus the scientific activities on assessment and mapping, because there is still a lack of available (published) methods.
- **Networking.** We plan to develop relationships with other scientific groups dealing with geosites, geotourism and geoconservation. We consider this *institutional networking* as a high priority. IUGS, IUG, UNESCO and ProGeo are especially concerned by this objective. Networking with other IAG WGs (e.g. geoarchaeology, terroirs viticoles) is also a priority.
- **Geoconservation.** In most countries, protection of geosites and geomorphosites is poorly developed. On the other way, impacts and pressure of human activities on geomorphology is growing, both in developing and industrialised countries. More knowledge of geoconservation is therefore important, both

at the institutional and scientific level. In the institutional point of view, we plan to document the various means adopted by the countries involved in the WG in order to be able to propose basic documentation for countries or regions interested to develop legal framework for geoconservation. In the scientific point of view, research on institutions, stakeholders configurations, public policies and property rights on geomorphological heritage is to be developed.

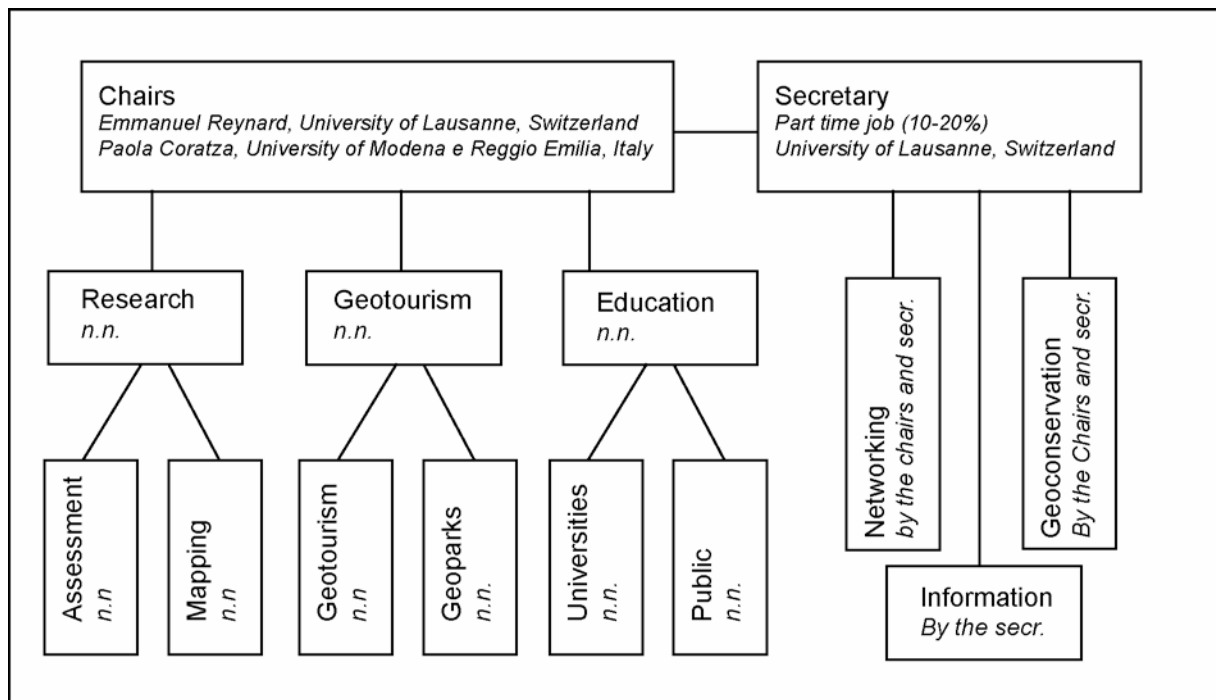
- **Geotourism.** The tourist sector is one of the economic sectors that could use the results of our researches. In this sense, we plan to develop several activities (e.g. scientific conferences, educative programs) in order to better anchor geomorphosite research in the development of eco- and geotourism. A particular attention will be dedicated to the development of research activities within *geoparks*.
- **Education.** As said above, several members of the WG developed university programs on geomorphosites. Educative programs at primary and high school levels, as well as education of the public and media, were not given so much attention. Education on geomorphosite, both at university and public levels, will be the fifth priority of our program. In this sense, we propose for example the organization of a *Summer school on geomorphosites* under the auspices of IAG.

### Organisation

During the period 2001-2005, they were two types of members: corresponding members (free participation) and full members (one or two per country, designated by the co-ordinator). Because most of the relationships between the members passed through the Internet and were co-ordinated by the chairman and the secretary, a high number of full members (one per country) was not really necessary.

For the period 2005-2009, we propose to conserve the distinction between corresponding and full members, but to restrict the second category to the chairmen, the secretary and the responsables of five objectives presented in the last section. We propose to adopt two chairmen and the University of Lausanne is able to propose a part-time (10-20%) job of secretary.

The organisation of the WG could therefore be the following one. The corresponding members are invited to join one or more of the thematic sections (research, geotourism and education).



## Working program

### 2006

- Organisation of the WG and secretary
- Administrative meeting of the full members
- Summer School on geomorphosites

### 2007

- Workshop on Geomorphosites and Geotourism

### 2008

- Workshop on Geomorphosites Assessment and Mapping
- 2<sup>nd</sup> administrative meeting of the full members

### 2009

- Publication of the main results
- Symposium 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Geomorphology

Lausanne/Modena, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2005

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