

## **GEOLOGICAL HERITAGE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN NATURTEJO GLOBAL GEOPARK**

Joana Rodrigues, Carlos Neto de Carvalho

Geopark Naturtejo da Meseta Meridional – European and Global Geopark. Gabinete de Geologia e Paleontologia, Centro Cultural Raiano, Avenida Joaquim Morão, 6060-101 Idanha-a-Nova. joana225@sapo.pt.

Since 2008, Portugal has new legislation on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity. *Geosites* and *geological heritage* are concepts included under the Law, and geoparks are recognized with an international status. In fact, the new law only presents the status but does not present any management plan for geoparks. Inside Portuguese geoparks, legal protection of geological heritage must be supported by several frameworks, such as cultural heritage (Law 107/2001), protected areas (Decree Law 142/2008) or municipal protection under Municipal Management Plans (PDM's).

Naturtejo Geopark is a European and Global Geopark, under the auspices of UNESCO, being located in the center of Portugal and Alto Alentejo, at the borderland with Extremadura, with 4617 km<sup>2</sup> that promotes geodiversity through 170 geosites, 16 defined as geomonuments due to their high relevance and monumental character, which represent the geological dynamics of the region since the Neoproterozoic. This geological heritage is the basis of the geopark, of its local development strategy based on geoconservation, education and geotourism.

Despite of the new Law of Nature Conservation, geoparks in Portugal are not considered protected areas and must find the application of legal tools to protect their geological heritage. New legislation presents the term *Geosite* and requires an Inventory of National Geosites, under preparation, with Natural Monument still being the best figure to protect geological heritage.

### **Protected Areas**

Protected Areas National Network is managed by the Institute for Nature Conservation and Biodiversity. This institution regulates these territories and holds their maintenance and forbidden activities are legally punished. There is also an environmental police force that controls these

<b>Protection framework</b>	<b>N. of geosites</b>
Natural Park (Tejo Internacional)	6
National Monument (Portas do Ródão)	20
Natura 2000 (Serra da Gardunha, Nisa/Laje de Prata, São Mamede)	28
Cultural Heritage: national protection	8
Cultural Heritage: municipal protection	3

One of the first efforts made by Naturtejo Geopark, cooperating with Associação de Estudos do Alto Tejo NGO and the municipalities of Vila Velha de Ródão and Nisa, was the protection of Portas de Ródão as Natural Monument, including other 20 geosites such as Conhal do Arneiro Roman gold mine that is also protected under the Cultural Law as national Monument of Public Interest. This legal figure does not provide a management plan but regulates and restricts human activities towards the protection of natural values, such as geology, geomorphology and paleontology with biodiversity and cultural landscape.

The highest level of protection in Naturtejo Geopark is attributed to Tejo Internacional Natural Park. This area has a management plan with several protection levels and restriction measures. Geological heritage was not clearly defined, but geological values are recognized and their damage can be punished. Naturtejo Geopark cooperates with the Natural Park by developing and promoting nature tourism projects. The conservation policies restrict the visits to some geosites, not particularly for geological reasons, but for fauna protection.

### **Natura 2000 Sites**

This is a EU framework based on the local sustainable development conciliating nature conservation and human activities. It is not a restrictive framework and some rules are imposed by other figures, including ecological national reserves defined under municipal management plans. In Naturtejo Geopark there are 28 geosites inside 3 Natura 2000 sites (Gardunha, S. Mamede and Nisa/Laje de Prata), including 11 more effectively protected under Portas de Ródão Natural Monument which overlaps S. Mamede Site.

### **Cultural Heritage**

Cultural heritage Law (2001) addresses relevant values such as paleontological, archeological and scientific ones. These cultural sites can be protected by the Portuguese state, like Monsanto National Monument which is also a geomonument and includes 6 other geosites within the special protection area. But also municipalities can act locally protecting and managing places like in Idanha-a-Nova municipality's Penha Garcia fluvial gorge (Ichnological Park), for example, restricting fossil hunting and promoting geoheritage awareness.

In these geosites, all the works, buildings and landscape changes have to be approved by the IGESPAR historical heritage institute and by local authorities.

### **Other frameworks**

Geosites like Portas de Almourão, Portas de Ródão or Penha Garcia also have international recognition as important bird areas. This framework with Special Bird Protection Zones concerns only avifauna values of the geosites.

### **Further protection measures at Naturtejo Geopark**

One of the aims of geoparks is geoconservation, and despite the legal emptiness, Naturtejo Geopark has been trying to frame its geological heritage. With the support of national and local organizations, Naturtejo is preparing new protection measures for Portas de Almourão and Fraga da Água d'Alta waterfall, geomonuments which were already recognized by European and Global Geoparks Network.

Altogether Portuguese geoparks and ProGEO – Portugal must work hard to establish proper legislation for geological heritage, and to conclude the National Inventory of Geosites.

# Geoevents, Geological Heritage, and the Role of the IGCP

Caravaca de la Cruz, September 15<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010

*Symposia*

Geoevents: learning about Global Changes

IGCP European Regional Meeting

First Meeting of ProGEO Regional Working Group SW Europe



Geoevents, Geological Heritage, and  
the Role of the IGCP



Caravaca, September 15-18, 2010

**ABSTRACT BOOK  
LIBRO DE RESUMENES**