

GEOLOGY, LANDSCAPE AND GEOMORPHOLOGY: FINDING THE PLACE OF GEOMORPHOLOGICAL HERITAGE

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Geomorphological heritage is constituted by geomorphological sites, which are landforms with scientific-didactic, cultural, aesthetic and/or economic value, and with particular importance for the comprehension of landscape evolution. In recent years, these concepts have been discussed especially in some European countries. In other countries and regions of the World spectacular geomorphological sites are being classified in the broad scope of geological heritage. In other cases they are considered geological sites (wide sense) with landscape and aesthetic values but without mentioning their geomorphological character, confusing therefore landscape and landform concepts. This work is a contribution for the organisation of geological heritage based on some of the earth sciences disciplines. In this model, geomorphological, paleontological, mineralogical, petrologic, stratigraphic, and tectonic sites must be integrated in their own heritage category. Special cases can be dropped in more than one category. All these abiotic heritage categories constitute the global geological heritage, part of the natural heritage. Geomorphological heritage can also be connected with cultural heritage, when a special human-landform interaction can be established. Geomorphological heritage is the most public-friendly category, enhancing the contact between general public and earth sciences and fostering the linkage between geoconservation strategies and geotourism. A methodology to classify geomorphological heritage is also presented in this work. This methodology is in progress in Portugal, involving the assessment of geomorphological sites and its relevance: local, regional, national, or international. These sites are organised according with nine geomorphological frameworks with national relevance, proposed in a previous work. This type of thematic arrangement should also be applied to all other geological heritage categories. These theoretical and methodological approaches aim to be a contribution to the inventory and evaluation of geological heritage with national relevance to be implemented in Portugal. The definitive acceptance of geomorphological heritage as a specific and essential issue within geological heritage is also expected.