

Geological heritage: Legal aspects and methodological approach

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In this communication, we suggest: (i) to review the governing laws of heritage in general; (ii) an inventory methodology of geosites and what is recommended by international instances: UNESCO, IUCN, etc.

Algerian law does not have special regulations that specify the content of the geological heritage. This concept is integrated in various laws related to the environment, cultural parks, etc. The geological heritage has never been treated as such.

Heritage is a fairly complex concept: it can be natural or cultural and the 'Natural' is subdivided into Biological and Geological Heritage.

Protection of heritage (natural and cultural) is until now carried out by cultural parks of the Ministry of Culture. By the interministerial decree of April 19, 2018, these parks are endowed with prerogatives associated to "follow-up of the works of development and exploitation of the sites and geological deposits....".

The geosites are integrated in the mining law of 2014 under the concept of "remarkable geological site" but this law does not mention the geological heritage. Only the mineral heritage which is an exhaustible and non-renewable wealth has been defined (Articles 5 and 6 of Mining Law 14-05).

Also, this law requires the preservation and enhancement of the heritage of the country's geological knowledge, including reference and representative rock samples, including macroscopic and microscopic samples, drill cores and powders. This is a remarkable advancement knowing that our country has ratified all international conventions relating to Heritage, whether natural (geological and biological) or cultural.

It is also noted that the Algerian Geological Survey Agency is endowed, within the institutional framework of its establishment, with structures having the competence to ensure the safeguarding and the promotion of the geological heritage. A structure is dedicated to this patrimonial activity as well as the compulsory legal deposit instituted by the mining law which requires to declare the realized infrastructure works and/or samples.

Geosites can be classified according to several parameters (among others):

a. Geological/geomorphological (IUCN typology): 1. Tectonic and structural characteristics; 2. Volcanoes / volcanic systems; 3. Mountain systems; 4. Stratigraphic sites; 5. Fossil sites; 6. Fluvial, lacustrine and deltaic systems; 7. Caves and karst systems; 8. Coastal systems; 9. Reefs, atolls and oceanic islands; 10. Glaciers and ice caps; 11. Ice ages; 12. Arid and semi-arid desert systems; 13. Meteorite Impact

b. values: 1. Scientific; 2. Educational; 3. Aesthetic; 4. Additional: economic/tourist, ecological, historical, symbolic.

Selection criteria (10: i, ii, ..., x) have also been defined by the convention of the World Heritage in an attempt to harmonize choices and promote the emergence of the best sites to inventory and classify.

The protection and preservation of remarkable sites impulse a local development dynamic that must be encouraged within the framework of sectoral policies put in place (e.g., SNAT) and sustainable development.

Keywords: Heritage, geosite, mining law, classification, sustainable development