Geomorphosite inventories for the promotion of tourism by geoheritage. The case of the Hérens and Réchy valleys (Switzerland)

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As for many Alpine valleys, the Hérens and Réchy valleys (Valais, Switzerland) have a very rich geological and geomorphological heritage, especially in terms of tectonic structure and glacial history. Despite this, very little has been done in the area to promote the geoheritage. At the moment, there is no official inventory of geoheritage in terms of Earth history or tourism promotion. This poster presents the results of a geomorphosite inventory conducted in the summer of 2011 in the Hérens and Réchy valleys. It is part of a larger project aiming at the development of geotourist products in the study area.

The assessment of geomorphosites followed the method of Reynard et al. (2007), designed to evaluate both the scientific and the so-called additional values of each site, what we could consider the "intrinsic value" of the sites. 38 sites were identified and evaluated. Furthermore, this work tested the assessment of the "use value" – in terms of conservation, tourist promotion and education – of each site. A set of new assessment criteria was developed, concerning the conditions of visit (access (type, time of walking, difficulty), safety, visibility, environmental context, links with other sites), the educational value (readability, presence of educative/interpretation means), and the potential economic products. After this test, the assessment method (Reynard et al., 2007) will be improved by adding a category "use values" to the existing "scientific" and "additional values".

Reference

Reynard E., Fontana G., Kozlik L., Scapozza C. (2007). A method for assessing the scientific and additional values of geomorphosites, Geographica Helvetica, 62(3), 148-158.