



Definition of a methodology for the management of geological heritage. An application to the Azores archipelago (Portugal)

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The conservation of the geological heritage requires the support of appropriate policies, which should be the result of the integration of nature conservation, environmental and land-use planning, and environmental education perspectives. There are several papers about inventory methodologies for geological heritage and its scientific, educational and tourism uses (e.g. Cendrero, 2000, Lago et al., 2000; Brilha, 2005; Carcavilla et al., 2007). However, management methodologies for geological heritage are still poorly developed. They should be included in environmental and land-use planning and nature conservation policies, in order to support a holistic approach to natural heritage. This gap is explained by the fact that geoconservation is a new geoscience still needed of more basic scientific research, like any other geoscience (Henriques et al., 2011).

It is necessary to establish protocols and mechanisms for the conservation and management of geological heritage. This is a complex type of management because it needs to address not only the fragile natural features to preserve but also legal, economic, cultural, educational and recreational aspects. In addition, a management methodology should ensure the geosites conservation, the local development and the dissemination of the geological heritage (Carcavilla et al., 2007).

This work is part of a PhD project aiming to contribute to fill this gap that exists in the geoconservation domain, specifically in terms of establishing an appropriate methodology for the management of geological heritage, taking into account the natural diversity of geosites and the variety of natural and anthropic threats. The proposed methodology will be applied to the geological heritage of the Azores archipelago, which management acquires particular importance and urgency after the decision of the Regional Government to create the Azores Geopark and its application to the European and Global Geoparks Networks.

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