



UNESCO Global Geoparks and the Transmission of the Earth Science Knowledge: A Case Study

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UNESCO Global Geoparks (UGGps) are a crucial vector for the transmission of Earth Science knowledge to local populations and to tourists. Valorisation actions of geoheritage and geosystems are inherent to UGGps, as set out in the terms of reference for the UNESCO Global Geopark label. Furthermore, they provide a spatial palette (a coherent territory) across which to implement these actions.

The Chablais region in France is an economically successful territory with an active lake and mountain tourism sector (10.4 million bed nights were recorded in 2015). Under its UNESCO Global Geopark label, the Chablais has sought to promote both its geoheritage, and its wider natural and cultural heritage. In 2017 and early 2018, a case study was undertaken in this area investigating the innovative transmission of Earth science knowledge to the general public.

Working in partnership with one of the world's largest ski areas, the Franco-Swiss Portes du Soleil Association, the Chablais UNESCO Global Geopark developed a unique outreach event for the winter ski season in the French Alps. Structured as an orienteering-treasure hunt set across 650km of ski runs, the game was devised to communicate the geoheritage of the territory. A structured approach was taken to the event design to address constraints such as the profile of the public, and the presence of an interested but non-participating public.

With the participation 283 skiers, a high-level assessment of the 2017 event confirmed both an effective adaptation to the operational constraints as well as its overall success. In 2018 a structured questionnaire was devised for the game participants to further quantify and qualify the event and its impact. This study was designed to measure the effective transmission of geoheritage, for example; the use of adapted language, content choice, and event design. This study demonstrates that due to the imbrication of the UNESCO Global Geopark label into the structure of each region, UGGps offer a wide potential for experimentation in the methods of communication to both an educational audience and the general public.