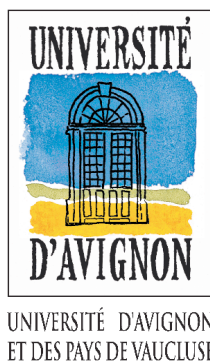




# GEOPARK PROJECT

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According to the *Charter of the European Geoparks Network* adopted in Greece the 5th June of 2000, a European Geopark “is a territory which includes a particular geological heritage and a sustainable territorial development strategy supported by a European programme to promote development. [...]”. These territories have been labelled regarding their geological, cultural and ecological heritage – since the early 2000s this Label knows a growing success among European countries, particularly in the West (France, Germany, Italy, Spain). In 2013, 54 European Geoparks received the precious label. This international recognition by UNESCO attracts Southern countries to implement development strategies in line with the recommendations of good-practices management oriented by international organizations. Indeed, UNESCO takes into account a plurality of selective criteria such as a remarkable heritage (geology, archaeology, biodiversity, cultural), citizen participation, sustainable regional economic development plan, heritage and socio-economic values for local populations, etc. to proceed to the inscription process. It is based on an integrated and sustainable management & conservation strategy of natural and cultural heritage from an interdisciplinary approach (Humanities and Life & Earth Sciences) in consultation with local stakeholders (local communities, universities and civil society). Currently, there is no “Geopark methodology” adapted to the South. Thus, the GEOPARK project aims to study potential areas with remarkable geological, ecological, social and cultural heritage in the Zat Valley (Morocco) – 60 km from the city of Marrakech which Medina was inscribed in 1985 on the World Heritage List. Endowed with varied skills in Humanities and Life and Earth Sciences, GEOPARK project partners (public, private) propose to study biodiversity, geology, prehistory, social aspects, geo-tourism, transfers of technical expertise regarding both territories, but also Geopark inscription process for Southern countries and local development.

This project is based on a multidisciplinary and scientific approach composed of top-down, bottom-up and interdisciplinary views and methodologies, but also on knowledge transfer between Western and Southern countries (Europe, Asia, latina Americana and Africa) and inter-sectorial experiences (public, private).

The second major objective of this research project is to provide an online Master program for those who wish to prepare themselves for a future career in geoparks and/or other fields linked to protected areas. With our new worldwide partnerships in academia and in other sectors, students in this educational program will be given an opportunity to learn the diverse approaches to the

question around the world in respect to their distinct local realities (details see Work-package 3).

#### WORK-PACKAGE1: GEOLOGY, BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT

Inventory and valorisation of geological and biological values in order to determine the integrated natural and cultural heritage, which characterizes the territorial identity (basis of the Geopark Project), including natural conservation measures. 2). Inventory of environmental weaknesses/menaces and proposal of prevention and recovering measures in order to assure sustainability of the economic activities proposed. 3). Elaboration of dissemination material related to geological, biological and environmental values in order to have a data base accessible to the decision makers (land use and territory planning) and to the management body of the Geopark project.4) Training and Education activities, oriented to students and civil population. This innovative approach include social sciences, economic aspects, living conditions of local populations, traditional houses and his building materials (clay and rocks) etc.

This WP1 in the first step of the proposal and integrates, in harmonic way, with the other complementary ones. This WP1 it is an important and basic Work-Package because is associated with studies of geology-environment-biodiversity and is a very innovative, multidisciplinary and relevant, because is associated to socioeconomic sciences, ethnography, art, local traditions and the overall living conditions of local populations.. The WP1 is divided into two main tasks: 1) the general study of geological-environmental scope and 2) the scope of the biodiversity. In turn, each of the two main tasks are subdivided into several sub-tasks according to the research work focused on specific aspects of environmental-geological areas and specific scopes of biodiversity.

#### WORK-PACKAGE 2 : HERITAGE AND GEO-DEVELOPMENT (TOURISM, SOCIAL, TERRITORY)

This WP has various research and transversal objectives in strong connection with other WP: (1) Contribute, together with other partners and WPs, to the inventory, especially all assets related to the Heritage of the Zat Valley (natural, cultural, social and historical), forms as a means of livelihood for local communities, the impacts on the environment and pathways of the historic site

to the knowledge of the environment of the Geopark (2) Consider and propose valid solutions to a patrimonialization, which could ensure the sustainability of the rock and heritage and the sites that include it and do the study, with non-destructive physico-chemical means, on the conservation of rock engravings in order to provide sustainable solutions (3) Consider and create a document on possible forms of tourism enhancement for the engravings to make them integrated into the processes of social and territorial development of the Zat valley (4) Develop an action plan based on the gender policy for the training of women and youth in educational technology and training in association with the environment and traditional culture of the Zat Valley Help local actors to position themselves in relation to the proposed Geopark.

This WP as a strong complementary approach (research, education, dissemination) with the other WPs in the process of reflection on the model of Geopark to develop fragile, but very rich in specific and great value heritage, regions. It prioritizes research around the issue of social development, heritage and tourism development in a tourist area ranked first in Morocco. Tourism is currently a strategic sector in Morocco because the stakes are high for the development of human capital and the economic and social transmission of knowledge between individuals, groups, regions, countries and generations. In synergy with the other teams of WPs, it will work towards the development of strategic frameworks and actions to make of heritage and tourism a development tool, able to contribute to poverty reduction in the High Atlas Mountains and especially in the Zat valley, a place of existence of a major park of rock engravings. Social inclusion of women (gender policies) is an important aspect in the context of our proposal, especially taking into account the new job opportunities if the Zat Valley is listed by UNESCO as a Geopark. The new educational and information technologies, maybe simple yet effective, and the knowledge of the environment and traditional culture of the area (strengths, weaknesses and opportunities) are key aspects in this framework.

### WORK-PACKAGE 3 : HIGHER-EDUCATION IN GEOPARK ISSUES

The main objective of this WP is to create an online Master program aiming at capacities building (students and professionals) in Geoparks taking into account local features and issues as a systemic approach (heritage, territory, geology, tourism, sustainability, development, populations).

Despite the few training courses on topics related to Geopark around Europe : *i.e.* in Greece, Portugal or Spain (“International Intensive Course on Geoparks” in Lesvos Geopark (Greece) co-organized by the University of the Aegean and the Natural History Museum of the Lesvos Petrified Forest; the Geopark course (2 ECTS) available on the e-learning platform of University Of Minho (Portugal); « Curso Patrimonio Geológico, Geoparques y Geoturismo » in Geopark Sobrarbe-Pirineos(Spain) organised by Universidad Internacional Mendez Pelayo.), there is no specialized Master degree in this area. Thus this WP intends to create a new educational program addressing the global issues of “outdoor museology”, especially applied to geoparks, from a multidisciplinary approach (including geology, paleontology, archeology, ecology, sociology, education, communication, ethics, etc.).

Our concern would be to associate researchers and professionals within the consortium and from our diverse partners in the same objective of creating an online Master program. This program will be available on the MNHN e-learning platform as a productive and long-term interaction result from each partner involved in GEOPARK project.

#### WORK-PACKAGE 4 : DISSEMINATION AND MANAGEMENT

This Work-package focuses more specifically on a website.

This website will gather well-structured information on issues related to geoparks. Two main orientations are retained: the presentation and valorization of the case study on Zat Valley in Morocco - methods and results for the inventory of heritage. We wish in particular to introduce a multi-layered GIS map of the study area in order to show the prominent heritage areas, but also areas at risk. Another part of this website will be dedicated to theoretical reflections about issues related to the creation of a Geopark: geoheritage, various inventory methods, geotourism, interpretation, museology, legal considerations, patrimonialisation of nature, etc. These theoretical presentations will be complemented by concrete case studies from different continents. With the purpose of approaching this objectives, the website will be designed as an interactive and participative platform of collaboration between participants involved within the project, but also as a research platform based on an innovative technological and advanced tools (cartography, database), a media canal (videos) and a dissemination support regarding the consortium activities (conferences, training sessions, workshops).