



NEW CHALLENGES WITH GEOTOURISM

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GEOPARKS – STRATEGY OF GEOCONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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After the creation of Global Geoparks Network – GGN by UNESCO in 2004 (Eder & Patzak, 2004), the interest in the creation and implementation of geoparks have been increasing worldwide. In 2006 the first Brazilian geopark was created, the Araripe Geopark in Ceará State - (it is the first of the Americas). Since then, other initiatives for creation of geoparks have emerged in different regions of the country, showing the geological community interest in preserving the geological heritage and yet fostering development.

Recently, the Brazilian Geological Survey – CPRM created the Geoparks Project aiming to identify, classify, catalogue and georeference the geological heritage of Brazil, as well as to define guidelines for its sustainable development. This activity will have to be developed by CPRM together with universities and other institutions or federal and state entities, which may have common interests, and in accordance with local communities. This project presents circa 50 potential areas for the creation of geoparks, scattered around the different Brazilian geological provinces.

There are several proposals going on: Alto Ribeira (SP state), Campos Gerais (PR state), Quadrilátero Ferrífero (MG state) and Serra da Bodoquena-Pantanal (MS state) among others. These areas constitute geological contexts of special heritage value and are highlighted in the Geodiversity map of the Brazilian States (CPRM, 2008).

Presumably the creation of Geoparks can contribute to the protection of geosystems in regions of special interest for geodiversity studies, for geotourism and geoconservation, including paleontological and mining heritage, natural monuments and scenic landscapes.

In the elaboration of different proposals for geoparks creation in Brazil, the geological community points out the importance of the implications and potentialities that geoparks aggregate, considering three standing pillars of such strategy: conservation, education and geotourism.

On an educational approach, the public universities of São Paulo State will promote a symposium in São Paulo city in July, 2009, with invited lecturers from Brazil and abroad, regarding educational projects on geoparks issues.

Pereira *et al* (2008) define geoparks as: “Territories where the geological heritage is the foundation for a strategy which promotes the populations’ well being, keeping the outmost respect for the environment”. This way it strengthens the understanding of an integrated concept of protection, education and development.

One recognizes, therefore, that the creation and implantation of geoparks constitute valuable tools or resources for the geoconservation and development. However, this initiative is covered with many complex implications and aspects, which demand vast considerations, studies and planning of concrete actions, so that its potential value for development may not be hindered by risks, also potential, which its sudden implantation allows for.

REFERENCES

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