

# **Analysis of opportunity on geoheritage activities in Muroto global geopark - through the comparison between 2 geological conservation program -**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to clarify the differences of 2 UNESCO geological conservation programs, World heritage program and Global Geoparks program, in terms of their evaluation and monitoring system by organizing UNESCO official documents. In addition that, through the case study of Muroto global geopark, the author attempts to grab the perspectives toward geopark of local people related to geotourism. The data was collected through qualitative method using interviews with residents related to 3 geotourism in Muroto. In conclusion, in both programs, evaluations are performed by the professionals who have specific knowledge of geology and both are put importance on its outstanding value as geological sites. World heritage programs retain the continuous monitoring system which is operated cooperation with external NGOs, academia and scientific professionals throughout both online and onsite monitoring after inscription, on the other hand, global geoparks only perform its monitoring every 4 years through the onsite evaluation. Moreover, the interview appears the truth that some residents involve themselves into geotourism without knowing of geopark concepts and objectives. Involving not only geological aspects but wide range of perspectives like world heritage program might help to establish sustainable geoheritage activities.

## **1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

UNESCO Global Geopark is one of the official programs which is operated by UNESCO since 2015 and now 127 areas are designated as Global Geoparks. Geoparks is a unified geographical area with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development and has a strong network which crosses over regions and countries. In terms of protection of geological sites, World Heritage program is shared similar points with Geoparks program, in point of both of them have geological criteria to recognize the sight international importance, official program under UNESCO, have independent system of evaluation, and require management plan and monitoring system after inscription. However, the comparison of these two programs were performed by Tanaka (2008) or IUCN (2016) which was only focused on the outline of both programs and it is not still clarified the differences between both in terms of the process of evaluation until inscription and monitoring system after inscription. Also, according to UNESCO, the geotourism is one of the key elements of the geoparks activities and the involvement of local people into the geoboards is necessary, however, the analysis on perspectives of local people toward geoparks and geotourism is not performed. This research aims to be clear the differences of 2 UNESCO geological conservation programs, World heritage program and Global Geoparks program by organizing UNESCO official documents as well as to grab the

perspectives toward geopark of local people related to geotourism through the case study of Muroto global geopark.

## **2. METHOD**

By UNESCO official documents analysis, it is examined the difference of evaluation and monitoring process between World Heritage program and Global Geopark Program. In addition that, by having interviews to residents related to 3 geotourism in Muroto, it is examine to grab local residents' attitude and knowledge toward geological perspectives.

### **2.1 Comparison of 2 UNESCO program; World heritage and global geoparks**

#### **2.1.1 The process of inscription and monitoring of world heritage sites**

The general objectives of World Heritage convention are to enhance worldwide understanding and appreciation of heritage conservation, to recognize and preserve natural and cultural properties throughout the world that have outstanding universal value to all of humanity, and to mobilize national and international resources. Since the first time the program started, world heritage program has relied sites evaluation on 2 international professional research institution; ICOMOS and IUCN. ICOMOS is a non-governmental international organization dedicated to the conservation of the world's monuments and sites and basically it is in charge of evaluating and monitoring on cultural sites. IUCN is a membership Union uniquely composed of both government and civil society organizations and it is responsible for evaluating and monitoring on natural sites. To be inscribed on the world heritage list, State Parties of the convention have to submit nomination files including sites introduction, outstanding universal value, monitoring system, related legal system and maps. The nomination is submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review and to check it is complete. Once a nomination file is complete the World Heritage Centre sends it to ICOMOS or/and IUCN for evaluation. After they receive nomination files, those are sent to experts knowledgeable about the property for external reviews. Based on the external reviews, they send 1-2 experts for field missions and then a panel of 10-20 experts from various academic fields meets to review each nomination, including the evaluator's report, reviewers' comments and other databases. After they have panel reviews twice, they finally conclude their recommendations to the sites and following their recommendation, the world heritage committee decides whether they inscribe sites on the world heritage list. Thus, until the sites inscriptions on the world heritage list, each site has to be evaluated by wide range of experts and it helps to assure the world heritage value. In terms of monitoring the sites, ICOMOS and IUCN are continuously responsible for it. They both have several monitoring officers who are responsible for monitoring sites protection in their team and they measure the damage or significant danger which might happen to sites by information which are sent by institutions members. Since both of institutions have the characteristic of the experts networking system, members including individual persons, NGOs, academias and governmental sectors are interactively exchange information related to sites both on online and onsite base.

#### **2.1.2. The process of inscription and monitoring of global geopark**

UNESCO Global Geoparks, within the IGGP, are the mechanism of international cooperation by which areas of geological heritage of international value, through a bottom-up approach to conserving that heritage, support each other to engage with local

communities to promote awareness of that heritage and adopt a sustainable approach to the development of the area. Originally, geopark program was not a UNESCO official program. In 2000, representatives from four European territories met together to address regional economic development through the protection of geological heritage and the promotion of geotourism. The result of this meeting was the signing of a convention declaring the creation of the European Geoparks Network (EGN) which was very close to the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) since the advocate of the program is a geologist who has been belonging to the IUGS. On the inscription of the global geoparks list, several points are similar to world heritage program. The sites have to submit nomination files which include sites introduction, outstanding universal value, management system, related legal system and maps as well as geotourism plan. Based on this files, geological experts give desk top reviews in terms of whether the sites have international significance of geological assets. After the reviews, geological experts have field mission and UNESCO global geopark council decides the conclusions to nominated sites. The difference from world heritage program is, after sites inscriptions on the global geopark list, sites have to accept field missions by experts every 4 years (2 years in case the sites are judged under threats) to measure management, monitoring and sustainable improvement are working or not. In other words, the monitoring system on geoparks are relied on on-site missions.

## 2.2. Interviews research in Muroto geopark

On UNESCO geopark official guideline (2017), it is addressed that “By raising awareness of the importance of the area’s geological heritage in history and society today, UNESCO Global Geoparks give local people a sense of pride in their region and strengthen their identification with the area” and therefore “one of the key elements of geopark activities is geotourism by local people”. Muroto geopark is one which officially inscribed on UNESCO global geopark in 2015 and active geotourism activities are positively evaluated. To clarify that local people who are involved in geotourism recognize the the area’s geological importance, history and value, author performed interview research to 3 unions which have Muroto geopark official geotourism.

*Table 1. 3 Unions which offer official geotourism in Muroto*

Union	Established year	No of active Members	Geological study frequency per year
A	1996	6	0
B	2009	46	48
C	2006	2	1

The interview was performed to each chairs of 3 unions. Among these 3 unions, only B union has constant study meeting about geology which is supported by local administrative. However, A and C unions are addressed as official geotourism offerer on Muroto website, they referred “geology is difficult and hard to understand. Since we started our tourism before Muroto gets to be geopark and we were asked to start geotourism, we don’t know how to put geological aspects in our tourism.” .

## 3. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, in both programs, evaluations are performed by professionals who have specific knowledge; world heritage programs ask to professionals who are in wide range of the fields on the other hand geopark program only asks professionals who have geological

background. World heritage programs retain the continuous monitoring system which is operated cooperation with external NGOs, academia and scientific professionals throughout both online and onsite monitoring after inscription, on the other hand, global geoparks only perform its monitoring every 4 years through the onsite evaluation. This causes the problem on geoparks that the sites reinforce its site activities only around the period of the onsite monitoring process. Moreover, the interview appears the truth that some residents involve themselves into geotourism without knowing of geopark concepts and objectives. This suggests the problem on geoparks program that focusing only on geological aspects make some people feel “too difficult” or “out of interest” for them and involving not only geological aspects but wide range of perspectives like world heritage program might help to establish sustainable geoheritage activities which involve more local residents.

## REFERENCES

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