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## Geoheritage Conservation : Indicators affecting the condition and sustainability of Geopark – a conceptual review

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### Abstract

Geopark concept is introduced to establish country's historical value while protecting all the priceless assets and has become an exciting eco-tourism destination. Due to these facts, there is an incredibly increasing number of tourists who will lead to an increasing demand for facilities and other tourism development. Hence, new eco-tourism development, growth and industry become a major concern that gives the potential and adverse impact or pose a problem to the environment. This research will study on the current indicator proposed by Global Geopark Network (GGN) and how the indicator involved in measuring the performance and establishing the Geopark concept.

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*Keywords:* Geoparks; ecotourism; geo-heritage; conservation

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### 1. Introduction

Historical areas have their distinctiveness and attraction, especially towards its esthetic and historical value. Heritage includes both tangible and intangible elements. Both factors could identify the level of identity and value

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towards human history and its surrounding environment. Heritage includes nature, culture, monument, archeological sites and others. Identity and image of a place depend on their historical background and also how the local authority plans for its development. Nowadays, rapid development and modern technologies show an excellent impression towards an attractive design approach. The purpose of those ideas was to promote to the whole world while automatically trying to solve the rapid increasing of population growth and globalization issues.

Surprisingly, continuous development had given a big impact towards the environment and became a primary concern. The primary changes and transformation of land uses, such as tourism, industrial and especially commercial had caused most of the historical place to be abandoned and less respected. Although there are many interesting design concepts and well – planned development that are introduced to each area, but current development had led to the issues towards the lack of identity and loss of historical value. Apparently, an uncontrolled development plan had created a rapid growth of modern design that has contributed to the loss of identity and distinctiveness character of precious historical places. The new design and ideas will create a good visual quality, but sometimes it may not consider in preserving the historical value that is important as the witness of the history of the early development around any particular area. If this phenomenon occurs, our future generation will lose their awareness towards history and also lost their chance to recognize the distinctive character of their heritage value.

In contrast to the present issues, there are a few approaches to reviving and preserving our historical value that is through the heritage conservation plan. One of the approaches is focusing on preserving Geo-heritage elements. Nowadays, the general view from the nation aspect is that some natural elements that including it surrounding's traditional culture and community identities is not well - respected. Therefore, in preserving the Geo-heritage value, a new concept known as Geopark area was introduced to be practiced by each country. This paper is aimed to discuss the current indicators proposed by Global Geopark Network by elaborate the indicator that involved in measuring performance and establishing the Geopark concept.

## **2. Geopark and geo-heritage conservation**

Geopark has become widely known as the most valuable and amazing heritage site for each country and also becoming as one of an exciting eco-tourism destination that are mostly requested. Geoparks served a richness of natural beauty, ecological harmony, archeological, geological and various cultural significant. Usually, heritage conservation concepts and ideas could be categorized to a few aspects such as cultural, monumental, artifact and including archeological sites (Howard, 2003). Therefore, Geopark is considered as innovative conservation approaches to protecting the Geo-heritage assets while encouraging scientific research, public education and local economic development (Komoo, 2010).

Accordingly, Geo-heritage refers to globally, nationally, statewide, to local features of geology, such as its igneous, metamorphic, sedimentary, stratigraphic, mineralogical, paleontological, geomorphic, and others at all scales, that are intrinsically or culturally significant sites, that offer information or knowledge regarding the formation or evolution of the Earth, or into the history of science, that can be used for research, teaching, or reference (Jayakumar & Liu, 2007). Meanwhile, conservation could be defined as referred work that carried out on heritage buildings, monuments and sites which include preservation, restoration, repair and rehabilitation, reconstruction and adaptive reuse, or any combination of these (Jaafar, Nordin, Abdullah, & Marzuki, 2014). Therefore, Geo-heritage conservation can be described as a management or process that involved any effort such as preservation, restoration, reconstruction or rehabilitation, which suitable and intended to focus on protecting any natural assets known as geology in order to maintain the value, history and sense of place for future benefits. Hence, Geopark ideas were coming out as one of the approaches that represent most of Geo-heritage conservation aspect.

According to LADA (2011), prefix 'Geo' is taken from the Greek word which, given the meaning of the earth while the geology is the study of rock that relates to its history, formation, composition, structure, and also how the landscape has formed from the process of Earth's evolution over millions of years. Therefore, Geopark is known as a location selected for its geological significance, and the above mentioned aspects of the site that researched and promoted through mass media for the general public as well as academia, so that the precious natural heritage of these Geoparks can be preserved for posterity.

Nevertheless, as mentioned by ProGEO (2011), Geopark could be defined as an informal (non-statutory) term to describe the complexes of geo-sites, or even small geo-sites that are promoted for touristic purposes. For instance,

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