

From valueless to valuable: geopark approach in sustainable transformation of disused quarry in Yandangshan Global Geopark of China

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Mining and quarrying sites in China create significant environmental problems that have occasionally triggered social unrest. They become a major political concern particularly for local government. In recent years, government and local communities have taken thorough environmental impact assessment, restoration plans, and the ways they are implemented, seriously. Operating mines and quarries generate local employment and stimulate economy, and are thereby able to supersede the adverse environmental impacts of their activities. However, such benefits vanish with the cessation of operation. Local discontent with operators over loss of jobs and permanent destruction of the local environment requires pacification and solution. This paper studied the effectiveness of a geopark to revive a quarry site in their post-quarrying period in Zhejiang Province of China. The geopark approach has proven to be very successful in transforming this disused quarry into a famous tourist attraction by pulling in over a million visitors per year from its surrounding cities including Shanghai and Hangzhou. They are attracted by the global geopark branding, the areas stunning and massive quarry caves, historical artefacts and traditional stone culture. Thousands of jobs are created for local people, either directly under the geopark management authority or indirectly by the geopark related local services and manufacturing enterprises. The revived quarry site makes possible the preservation of its ancient Chinese quarrying history and traditional stone culture, which concurrently produces an extremely strong sense of pride and belonging among the local communities. This case study is an excellent example in China reaffirming the effectiveness of a geopark in the restoration and transformation of valueless mining and quarry sites into valuable 'gold mines' for sustainable uses and the long-term benefits of local people.

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