

Article

Assessing Utilization and Comfort in a Village Scenic Park: Implications for Rural Revitalization

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Abstract: Scenic parks in rural areas occupy crucial positions, serving as vital hubs for the daily lives of villagers and important leisure destinations for tourists. This research is dedicated to assessing the significance of the scenic park in Wawuzhuang Village from the perspectives of both villagers and tourists. Employing a comprehensive research approach, this study examines the current state of the scenic park and its ability to meet the requirements of villagers and tourists. Villagers, mainly elderly individuals with low levels of education, rely heavily on green spaces for leisure and social interaction. In contrast, younger tourists and villagers require spaces that offer more comfort and aesthetic appeal. This study highlights the possibility of designing rural scenic parks to meet the basic needs of both tourists and villagers. In addition, mixed-use designs and public participation designs are suggested to promote the use of rural parks, potentially creating an attractive community environment that attracts new villagers and more tourists. Although this study is limited to a single case, it lays the groundwork for further research in other rural areas. This research contributes to the sustainable development of rural revitalization.



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Keywords: rural revitalization; sustainable development; scenic park; rural park design; rural tourism

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

It is widely recognized that rural areas are generally considered to offer better greenery than urban areas. Many villages have their own public green spaces and these spaces not only provide comfortable environments for communication among villagers but also have significant positive effects on well-being [1–4]. Given that the cost of transportation between rural areas is higher than within rural areas themselves, social interactions in rural areas tend to occur within the villages themselves [5]. This reliance on rural green spaces and public activity centers is crucial to rural life.

To escape the intense pressures of urban life, many people prefer rural areas as destinations for relaxation and leisure [6–8]. For rural revitalization villages with a focus on tourism, public green spaces play a pivotal role in attracting tourists [9], enticing villagers to return [10], or attracting immigrants [2,11]. Rural tourism has tremendous development opportunities and potential [12], and public green spaces also influence tourists' choices [13], impressions, and memories. They can help attract villagers [14] and contribute to the success of rural revitalization [15]. Interactions between tourists and local residents strengthen relationships with destinations [16] and lead to repeat visits. In some cases, they may even result in tourists relocating and becoming local residents, which

can enhance local vitality. In the current context of rural revitalization, such scenarios are conducive to its success.

Additionally, comfortable rural green spaces facilitate reduced reliance on air conditioning and related equipment, contributing to achieving low-carbon goals [17]. By providing shaded areas, natural ventilation, and ambient temperatures, they create comfortable settings, reducing the need for energy-intensive cooling systems. As people opt for these refreshing and tranquil spaces, it leads to decreased energy consumption, aligns with low-carbon initiatives, and promotes sustainable lifestyles.

In the current rural revitalization designs in China, there is a predominant focus on constructing distinctive and culturally rich buildings. The emphasis is on ensuring that these buildings possess unique features and cultural significance. When it comes to design considerations, landscape elements are given lower priority compared to the aesthetics of architectural features. Various regions have introduced guidelines and manuals for rural housing design and standards. Many typical rural areas tend to overlook the design and provision of public spaces and green areas [18,19].

However, there is currently a lack of specific regulations and guidelines for public green spaces in rural areas. In 2018, the People's Republic of China issued the national standard GB/T 37072-2018 [20], titled 'Evaluation for the Construction of Beautiful Villages'. This standard includes criteria for evaluating the rural public environment but does not provide detailed specifications for the design of public green spaces.

Urban landscapes are frequently discussed, and pocket parks in cities are also commonly addressed. Research has also indicated that parks play a significant role in promoting health [21–23], social well-being [24–27], community communication [28], community activities [29], and low-carbon conservation [30,31]. With the development of digital technology, research on intelligence has emerged internationally, such as the integration of smart cyberparks, which has enhanced the functionality of parks [32,33]. Additionally, national parks are often discussed, as they contribute to economic development [34,35], nature conservation [36,37], and other aspects.

Research related to rural landscapes often concentrates on topics such as land use changes [38–42], the need to enhance low-carbon awareness and behavior [43,44], ecological impacts [45,46], and the influence of changes in agricultural landscapes [47–49]. Villages with rich cultural heritage [50–53] are also frequently discussed, including topics such as heritage preservation [54] and utilizing heritage for rural revitalization [55].

However, it is important to note that most villages are very ordinary and face the reality of construction cost constraints. In particular, some villages are facing challenges related to landscape degradation and the deterioration of public green spaces due to a decrease in younger populations [56] and inadequate construction funds [57–59]. These aspects of daily life also merit attention. While a considerable amount of research has been conducted on general rural issues in China, these studies have focused primarily on improving land utilization rates [60–62], improving the energy efficiency and thermal comfort of rural housing [63–66], and addressing key issues in rural revitalization [67]. However, there is relatively little research that focuses on specific rural parks. Although these studies provide a macroscopic perspective on rural spatial planning, design, and rural revitalization strategies, they are somewhat lacking in terms of specific measures and strategies for improving and designing rural public parks, especially in ways that meet the needs of villagers and attract tourists.

In the rural revitalization process, these villages also require the redesign of their public green spaces. In this context, it is crucial to consider how these designs should be approached and what criteria can meet the minimum requirements of villagers while also being attractive to tourists.

Furthermore, the aforementioned studies often focus on a singular aspect, but rural areas constitute complex social organizations [50] that require multifaceted considerations and validations. Therefore, comprehensive research on various factors is necessary.

Given the intricate social fabric that defines rural areas, addressing the diverse needs of these communities during the rural revitalization process requires a comprehensive reimagining of public green spaces. The classification of parks is typically conducted on a macro scale, posing challenges when applied to the small scale of rural parks. Generally, rural parks are funded and constructed by the government, which also differentiates these parks based on different objectives during the construction process, thereby shaping their design and functionality to meet specific needs. To address the complexity of rural social organizations, our research categorizes rural parks into three types (Table 1) based on field surveys: policy promotion, scenic, and utilitarian. This classification reflects the actual use by community members, although it may limit the multifunctionality of parks to some extent, as observed in practice.

Table 1. Classification of rural parks in the study area; (a) policy promotion park, (b) scenic park, (c) utilitarian park.

Photo	Basic Concept	Main Form	Main User
 (a) Policy promotion park	A space mainly for the village committee to promote various policies.	Bulletin board, a small amount of greenery, brick, stone, or cement paving.	Village cadres and villagers for short-term use.
 (b) Scenic park	A green space for relaxation, rest, and communication during daily life.	Seating, lawn and shade trees, and brick, stone, or cement paving.	Villagers, tourists.
 (c) Utilitarian park	A place for the villagers to temporarily store agricultural tools or dry grains.	Brick, stone, or cement paving.	Villagers engaged in agricultural activities.
All the photos were taken by the team during the field survey.			

Policy promotion parks emphasize revolutionary and historical culture, often marked by significant signage. Due to the lack of greenery and seating, villagers usually choose to leave after viewing policy announcements. In addition, because policies are released irregularly, villagers typically gather to observe shortly after new policies are released. The users of utilitarian parks are typically villagers engaged in agricultural activities, especially during the harvesting season when the utilization rate is the highest. Given the need to dry crops, there is usually no greenery and seats in this area, and people typically leave after finishing their farm work. Scenic parks prioritize greenery appreciation and relaxation,

where users can also engage in physical exercise or cultural activities and others. Scenic parks are the most frequently visited parks by both tourists and villagers and serve as excellent spaces for communication and interaction. And scenic parks are also the most discussed category.

The objective of this study is to analyze and survey the existing scenic park in an ordinary rural village, employing a comprehensive research approach, with the aim of exploring the proportions of various elements of the scenic park. This research will serve as a reference for the construction of public green spaces in rural areas. This study provides original insights based on the context of the shortage of funds for village construction. It is important to consider multiple aspects of rural revitalization to meet the needs of villagers while also attracting tourists. Furthermore, our study classifies rural parks in the study area, contributing to a better understanding of rural parks. By adopting a comprehensive approach to rural development, our study aims to provide insights into effective intervention strategies for sustainable rural landscape management and revitalization.

1.2. Research Aim

For rural villages engaged in tourism-driven rural revitalization [68–70], the scenic park serves as both a community activity center and a venue for internal cultural exchange and relaxation for villagers and tourists alike. Satisfaction [71] with the space becomes a critical factor in park use. Satisfaction typically encompasses factors such as the convenience of the location, whether the content meets expectations and the comfort of the environment. And the utilization rate significantly influences the promotion of cultural exchange. This, in turn, further impacts the outcomes of rural revitalization and the sustainable development of the village.

This research is specifically dedicated to a nuanced examination of scenic parks in rural areas, with a primary focus on Weihai. Using Wawuzhuang Village as a representative case study, the aim is to delve into the intricacies of the scenic park and understand its impact on both villagers and tourists in the specific regional context of Weihai. Using a combination of established research methods (Figure 1), ANP weights, Likert scales, spatial syntax, environmental simulation (ENVI-met (ver5.5.1)), and RayMan (ver1.2) software, this study aims to meticulously evaluate the satisfaction, accessibility, and comfort of the scenic park. This research will serve as a localized exploration, providing valuable insights into the unique role scenic parks play in the rural landscape.

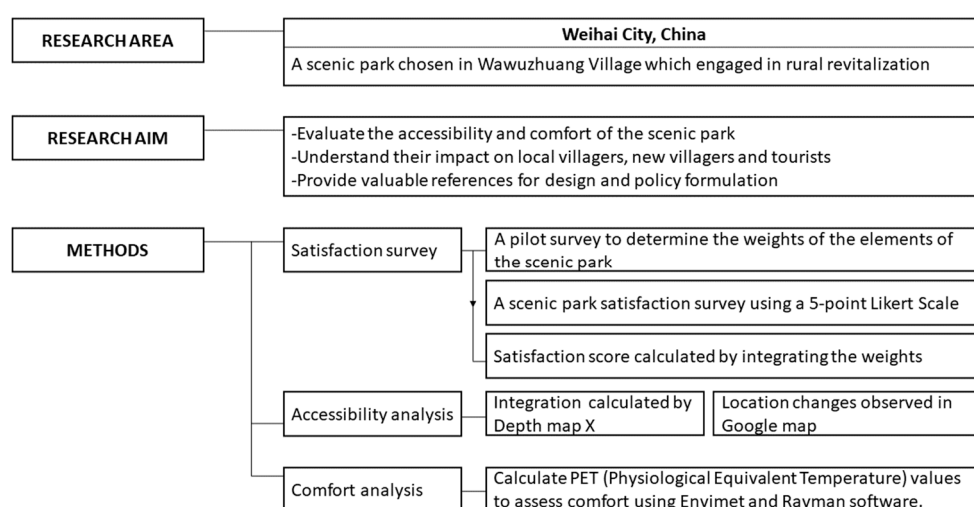


Figure 1. Framework (drawn by the authors).

The findings will enhance the understanding of the dynamics of scenic parks in Weihai and provide insights applicable to similar settings in other cities, guiding sustainable design, development, and policy formulation in the broader context of rural revitalization. These

findings will support evidence-based decision-making to optimize the design, management, and use of scenic parks in line with the village's overarching goals of leveraging cultural capital, attracting tourists, and cultivating a vibrant, resilient community.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Research Area

This research specifically focuses on a scenic park in Wawuzhuang Village, Weihai City (Figure 2). Weihai City has been recognized by the UN-Habitat as a livable city with significant tourism potential [72].



Figure 2. Research area marked on a map issued by the Ministry of Natural Resources, China (survey number: GS(2019)1652) [73].

Wawuzhuang village is about 14 km from the airport by road (see Figure 3). According to data obtained from Mrs. Zhou [74], the village comprises 180 households with a total population of 402 individuals. The village has adopted an artistic approach to rural revitalization, notably transforming a former granary into the Bikeguan Art Museum, which primarily exhibits various forms of comic art and has been selected as a new type of public cultural space in Weihai. The scenic park selected as the research subject—is located near the art museum. The village aims to use the art museum as a means to entice villagers to return or to attract new residents, thereby enhancing the overall landscape of the village and increasing the income of its residents. In 2023, the number of visitors varied between 160 and 360 each month, according to the museum operator, Mr. Yan [75].



Figure 3. The information of the research subject; (a) the layout of Wawuzhuang Village (Google Earth image—October 2021 [76]); (b) the surroundings of the scenic park (drawn by the authors); (c,d) the photos of the scenic park (photographed by the authors).

2.2. Methods

2.2.1. Satisfaction Survey

In the satisfaction assessment, the Likert scale [15] coupled with the weighted scoring [77] was utilized. A pilot survey for the general public was conducted online (Table 2) in August 2023, and the weights of three elements of rural scenic parks were determined through the analytic network process (ANP). Additionally, ratings were obtained for these three elements using a 5-point Likert scale. These three elements were lawn and shade trees, seating, and paving. They are crucial components that significantly influence the quality and functionality of the scenic park.

During the satisfaction survey of scenic parks, identical questionnaires were distributed to both residents and visitors (Table 3) in two separate sessions: September 2023 and May 2024. Before filling out the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand their usage of the park and to ascertain if they were the appropriate respondents for the survey. After confirming their suitability, they were then asked to rate three elements of the park. The on-site surveys solicited participants to assess each element using a 5-point Likert scale. Finally, in conjunction with the assigned weights, we derived the overall satisfaction of users with the research subject. Given that the majority of villagers are elderly and have lower levels of education, surveys targeting the village residents were conducted through onsite distribution and observation methods [78]. Visitors and new villagers, on the other hand, are primarily young individuals; thus, online ques-

tionnaires were administered. The visitors and villagers participating in the questionnaire survey were randomly selected; 67 valid questionnaires from visitors and 89 from villagers were collected.

Table 2. Characteristics of the pilot survey (N = 94).

Individual Characteristics		Percent(%)	Frequency
Gender	Male	54.26	51
	Female	45.74	43
Residence	City	58.51	55
	Rural	29.79	28
	Urban–rural integration	11.70	11
Education level	High/vocational below	20.21	19
	High/vocational	37.23	35
	Bachelor	38.30	36
	Master’s and above	4.26	4
Age group	20 and below	10.64	10
	21–30	28.72	27
	31–40	34.04	32
	41–50	20.21	19
	51–60	4.26	4
	61 and above	2.13	2

Table 3. Characteristics of the satisfaction survey (N_{visitor} = 67, N_{villager} = 89).

Individual Characteristics		Visitor		Villager	
		Percent (%)	Frequency	Percent (%)	Frequency
Gender	Male	46.27	31	47.19	42
	Female	53.73	36	52.81	47
Education level	High/vocational below	13.43	9	57.30	51
	High/vocational	25.37	17	26.97	24
	Bachelor	32.84	22	15.73	14
	Master and above	28.36	19	-	-
Age group	20 and below	16.42	11	4.49	4
	21–30	25.37	17	5.62	5
	31–40	25.37	17	12.36	11
	41–50	14.93	10	22.47	20
	51–60	10.45	7	28.09	25
	61 and above	7.46	5	26.97	24

Participants in this study were comprehensively briefed on the objectives, potential utilization of the interview, and questionnaire findings, and explicit consent was obtained for the subsequent analysis. The amalgamation of these varied data sources not only enriched the understanding of rural scenic park dynamics but also contributed to the advancements of rural scenic park design, planning, and development strategies.

2.2.2. Accessibility Analysis

This study utilizes the spatial syntax [79] theory-based analysis software Depthmap X [80,81] to investigate the accessibility of the scenic park in Wawuzhuang Village. Depthmap is widely used for analyzing spatial structures, especially in studies related to transportation accessibility. After disentangling the housing and road systems (Figure 4) in Wawuzhuang Village, the road system was then integrated into Depthmap for accessibility analysis. Higher integration indicates easier spatial accessibility [82,83]. Easy access is an important factor in increasing utilization [84].

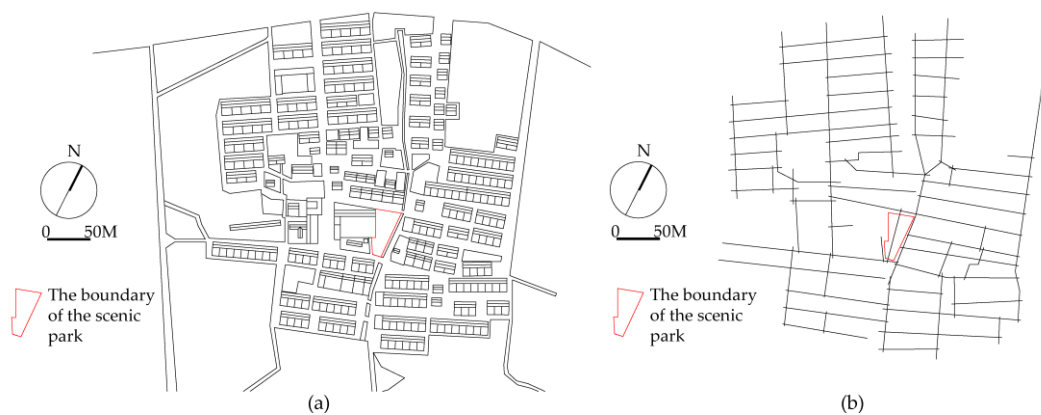


Figure 4. AutoCAD model (drawn by the authors); (a) the dwellings; (b) the road system.

The aim is to measure the accessibility of the scenic park, calculating its ability to attract the villagers and visitors as a destination. This reflects the centrality of the space within the entire Wawuzhuang Village. This result can allow us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of the scenic park in the community. The findings provide a scientific basis for future planning and design.

Furthermore, using Google Maps (Figure 5) to observe the changes in the location of the rural scenic park [7] contributes to understanding the geographic distribution of the park within the village.

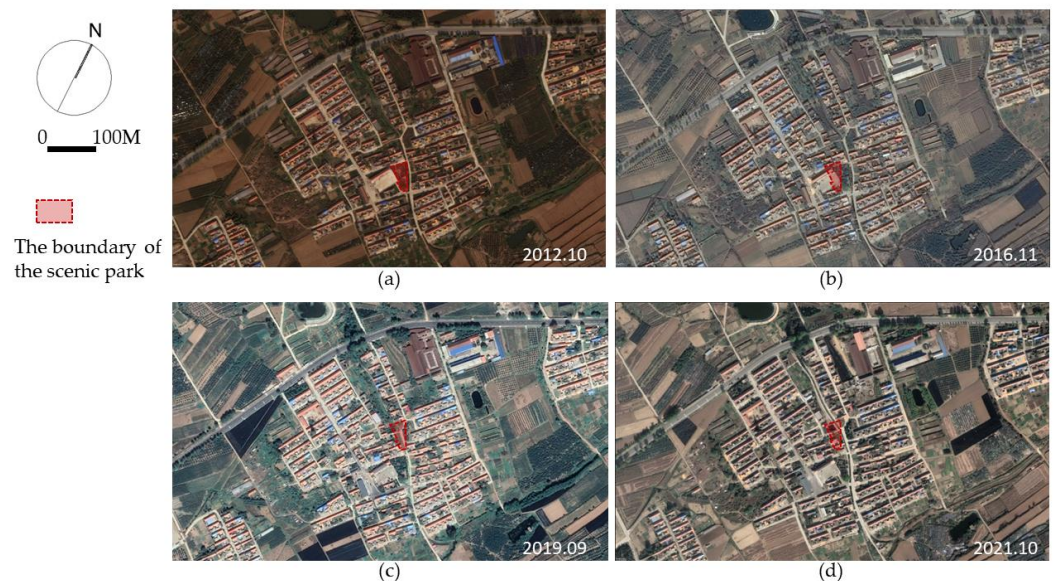


Figure 5. Google Earth images of Wawuzhuang Village [76] (a) October 2012, (b) October 2016, (c) September 2019, (d) October 2021.

2.2.3. Comfort Analysis

The urban heat environment is frequently discussed, but there is relatively little discussion about rural areas and even less about rural scenic parks. Discussions often focus on southern regions, with less attention given to the northern areas, especially in cold and extremely cold regions [85]. However, due to the cool summer climate in Weihai and the limited use of cooling devices such as air conditioning in rural residences [86], outdoor public green spaces serve as the primary places for villagers to cool down during the summer. In the process of designing rural revitalization villages, it is necessary to consider these lifestyle habits. These habits can be closely integrated with low-carbon practices in the future. The scenic park in Wawuzhuang Village has existed for a long time. Analyzing

this existing space can help assess whether the current elements (seating, lawn and shade trees, paving) meet the comfort requirements. This analysis can then provide valuable insights into the design of these spaces in the future or for other villages.

An outdoor environment analysis was conducted using the widely employed ENVI-met (ver5.5.1) and RayMan (ver1.2) software, with the Physiological Equivalent Temperature (PET) (Table 4) used as the comfort index [14,87,88].

During the field survey, discussions emerged within the village regarding the substitution of the existing brick flooring with wood plank as part of the village’s revitalization initiative. However, this proposal was eventually dismissed due to concerns about preserving the village’s 500-year-old ginkgo trees and limited funding. Consequently, the ENVI-met simulation (Figure 6) was employed to model both the present brick flooring condition and the dismissed wood plank plan.

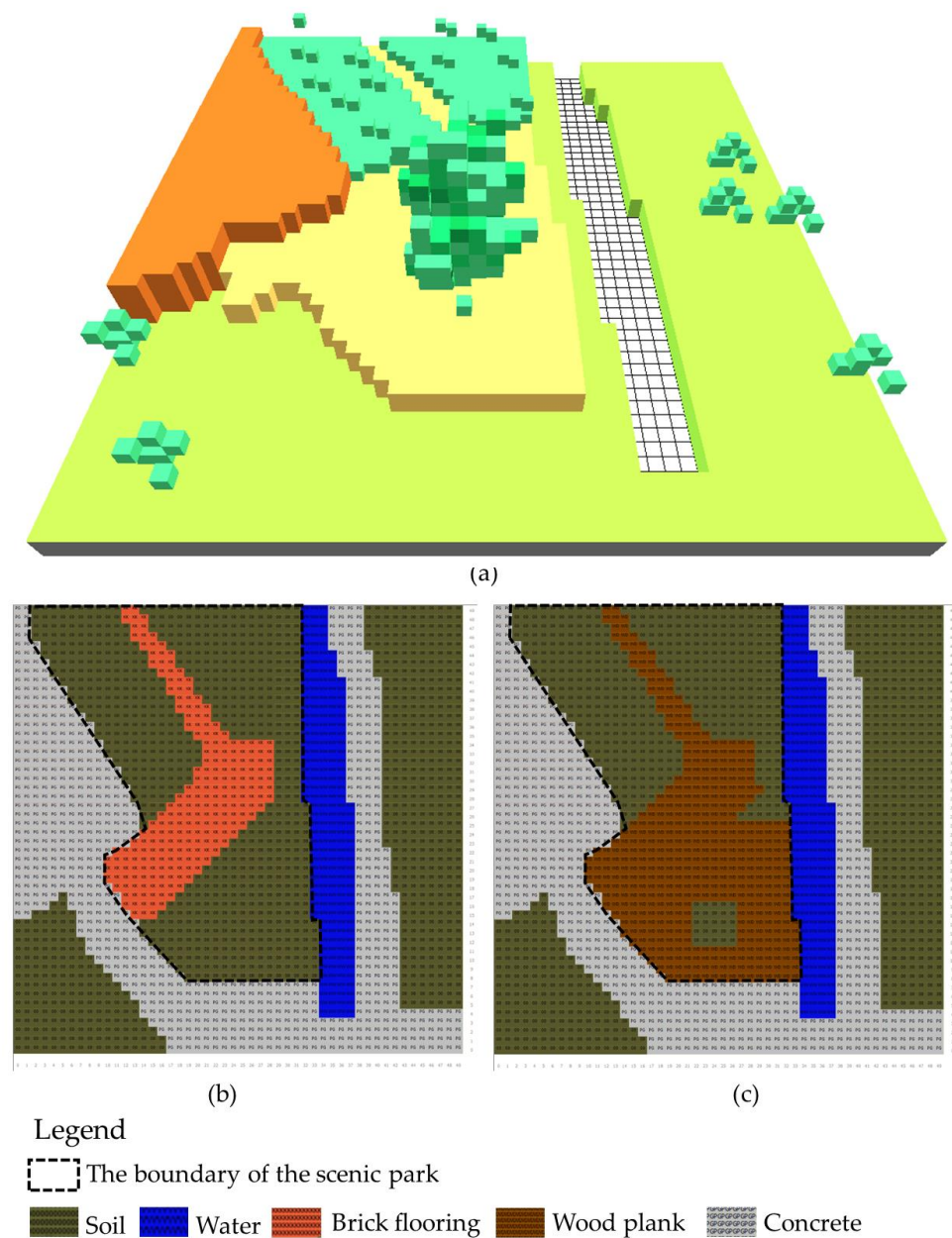


Figure 6. Simulation model; (a) the 3D view model; (b) brick flooring; (c) wood plank.

Table 4. Relationship between thermal sensation and PET.

Thermal Sensation	PET Range (°C)
Very cold	<−16
Cold	−16 to −11
Cool	−11 to −6
Slightly cool	−6 to 11
Neutral	11 to 24
Slightly warm	24 to 31
Warm	31 to 36
Hot	36 to 46
Very hot	>46

This analysis focused on a thermal environment on 23 June 2023. Based on site visits and temperature records, a gradual increase in temperature was observed after the summer solstice, starting from 23 June 2023. On that day, the weather was clear. The highest temperature recorded was 36 °C on June 27, with some periods of overcast skies. Subsequently, from June 27 until the start of autumn on August 8, there were no days with temperatures exceeding 35 °C. As a result, 23 June 2023 was selected for the thermal comfort calculation.

3. Results

3.1. Both Villagers and Tourists Are Generally Satisfied with the Scenic Park

The pilot survey conducted online yielded a Cronbach's α coefficient of 0.874. The weights of the different elements related to the scenic park obtained through the analytic network process (ANP) are presented in Table 5:

Table 5. Analytic network process results.

Item	Average Value	TTL (Indicator Score)	Weight Value
Lawn and shade trees (1–5)	3.68	1.50	33.33%
Seating (1–5)	3.75	2.50	55.56%
Paving (1–5)	3.48	0.50	11.11%

Visitors' satisfaction with the scenic park is rated at 3.94, with the majority of visitors being under 50 years of age. In contrast, villagers' satisfaction with the scenic park is rated at 3.43, with the majority of villagers being over 50 years of age (Table 6). This difference may be attributed to the fact that old villagers are tired of rural landscapes and yearn for urban ones [15].

Table 6. Satisfaction of survey respondents.

Evaluation Index	Visitor			Villager		
	Mean	Weights	Satisfaction Level	Mean	Weights	Satisfaction Level
Lawn and shade trees (1–5)	4.16	33.33%	3.94	3.93	33.33%	3.43
Seating (1–5)	3.73	55.56%		2.99	55.56%	
Paving (1–5)	4.31	11.11%		4.12	11.11%	

During the satisfaction surveys and interviews, the elderly villagers expressed a desire for more activities within the village. While this request may be related to the village management, it may have an impact on satisfaction scores. Visitors often have brief stopovers and do not center their daily lives around green spaces, resulting in a higher level of acceptance of these areas. Conversely daily, to attract more visitors or encourage

them to stay longer in the scenic park, improving the comfort of these areas is essential, with the number of available seats being a modifiable factor.

Visitors have also expressed a desire for the park to incorporate more elements of ginkgo tree culture and artistic features to create a richer cultural atmosphere. They believe that this would encourage them to spend more time in the park and make them more inclined to visit the park for relaxation purposes in the future. The villagers also expressed the need to strengthen cultural connections.

3.2. The Scenic Park Is Located in the Most Accessible Area within the Village

An in-depth spatial analysis of the village's road network reveals that this scenic park is situated in the most accessible location within the village (Figure 7).

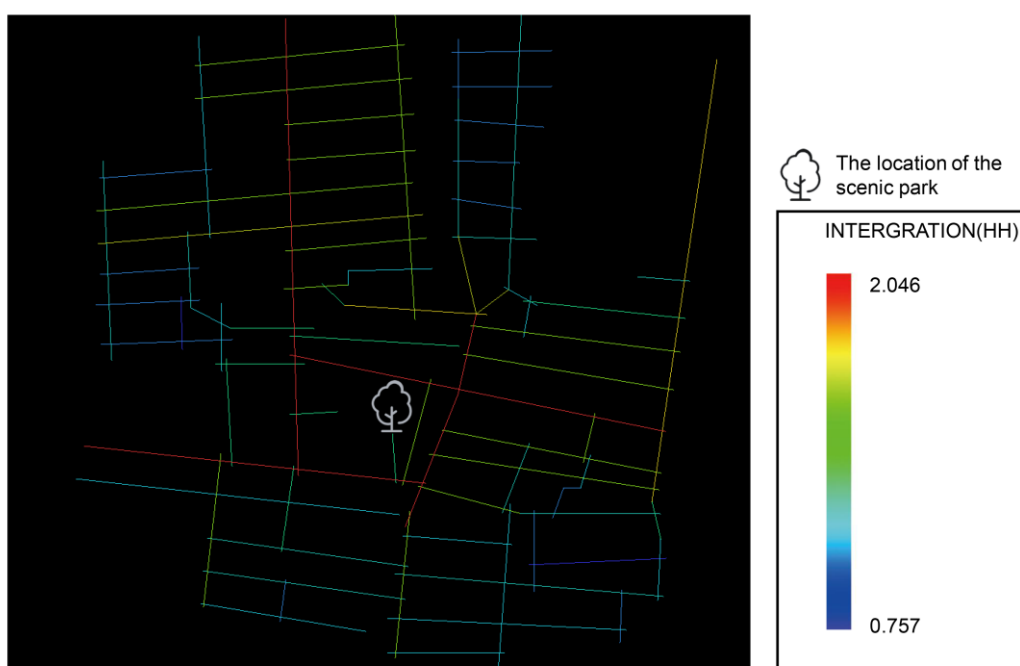


Figure 7. The results of the Depthmap analysis.

It is evident from Google Maps (Figure 5) that the physical location of the scenic park in Wawuzhuang Village has remained unchanged at least from 2012 to the present. Centered around a 500-year-old ginkgo tree, which in traditional Chinese culture symbolizes longevity, it represents the village's cultural heritage and serves as a beacon of enduring values. This symbolism likely attracts people seeking blessings for a long life. By incorporating on-site interviews, it can be speculated that the location of this scenic park has likely been constant since the ginkgo trees first flourished.

This static yet timeless ginkgo tree has become an integral part of the village's culture and identity, serving as a gathering point for people of all ages. Due to the ancient history of the ginkgo tree, it is challenging to verify whether the tree was planted in response to the influx of people to the green space or if the planting of the tree provided shade, attracting people to the green area. It stands as a symbol of resilient connections to the past and cultural endurance within the ever-evolving rural dynamics. The geographical positioning and cultural significance of the ginkgo tree will contribute to attracting more tourists and new residents, enhancing the cultural and tourism revitalization of Wawuzhuang Village.

3.3. The Scenic Park Is also the Best Choice for Cooling down during the Hottest Summer Day

The potential air temperature, wind speed, and relative humidity of the site are presented in Figure 8. The PET values under and around the ginkgo tree are shown in Table 7 and Figure 9.

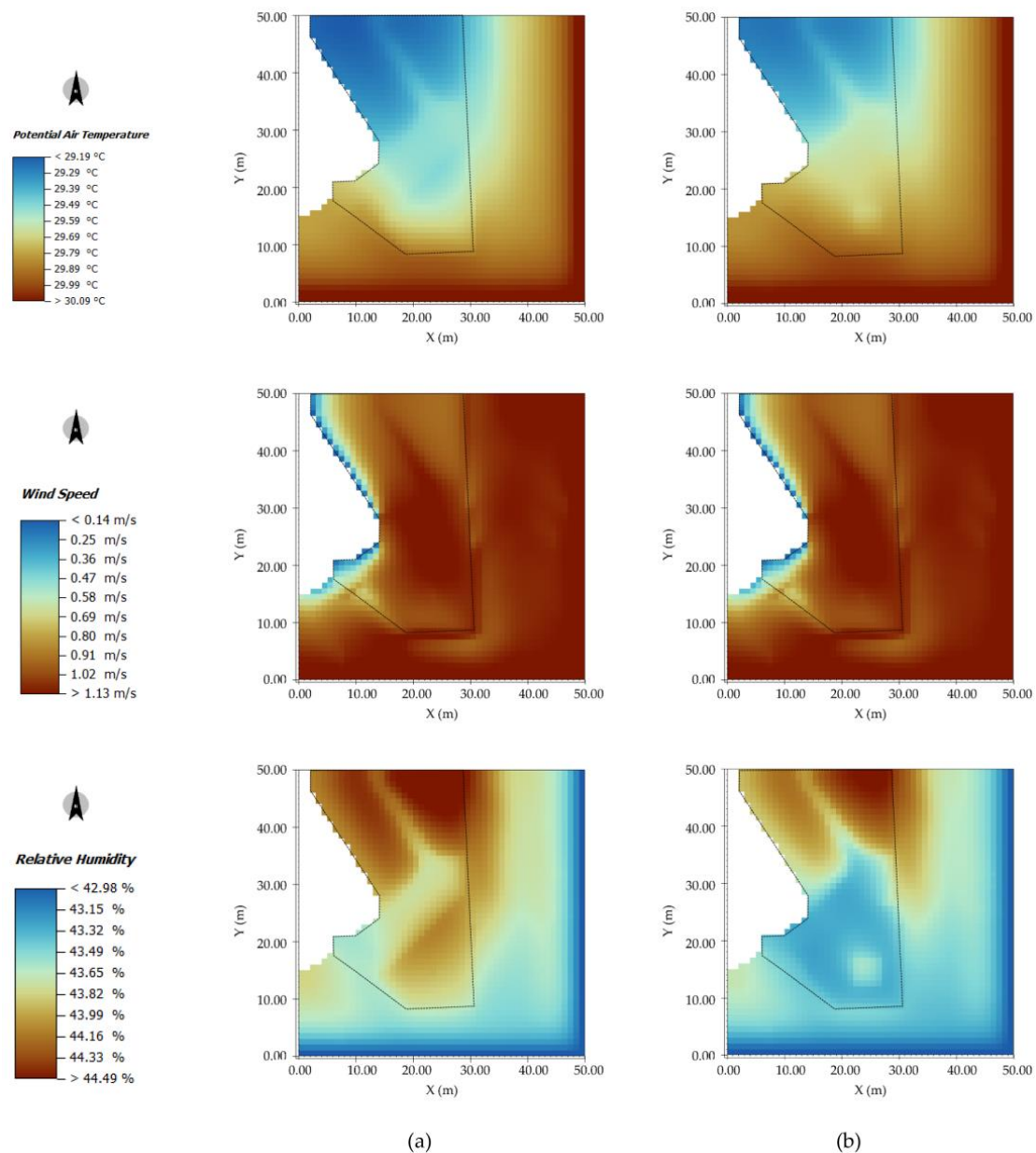


Figure 8. The AT/WS/RH map at 10:00 a.m. (a) Brick flooring; (b) wood plank.

Table 7. Thermal comfort evaluation of PET.

Time	Brick Flooring				Wood Plank			
	Around the Tree		Under the Tree		Around the Tree		Under the Tree	
10:00	32.625	Warm	32.100	Warm	33.800	Warm	32.775	Warm
11:00	25.150	Slightly warm	24.600	Slightly warm	26.150	Slightly warm	25.150	Slightly warm
12:00	25.575	Slightly warm	25.075	Slightly warm	26.625	Slightly warm	25.650	Slightly warm
13:00	26.500	Slightly warm	25.975	Slightly warm	27.650	Slightly warm	26.575	Slightly warm
14:00	26.700	Slightly warm	26.150	Slightly warm	27.900	Slightly warm	26.800	Slightly warm
15:00	26.100	Slightly warm	25.475	Slightly warm	27.225	Slightly warm	26.125	Slightly warm
16:00	24.700	Slightly warm	24.100	Slightly warm/Neutral	25.800	Slightly warm	24.725	Slightly warm
17:00	23.150	Neutral	22.725	Neutral	24.050	Slightly warm/Neutral	23.200	Neutral
18:00	21.700	Neutral	21.225	Neutral	22.500	Neutral	21.725	Neutral

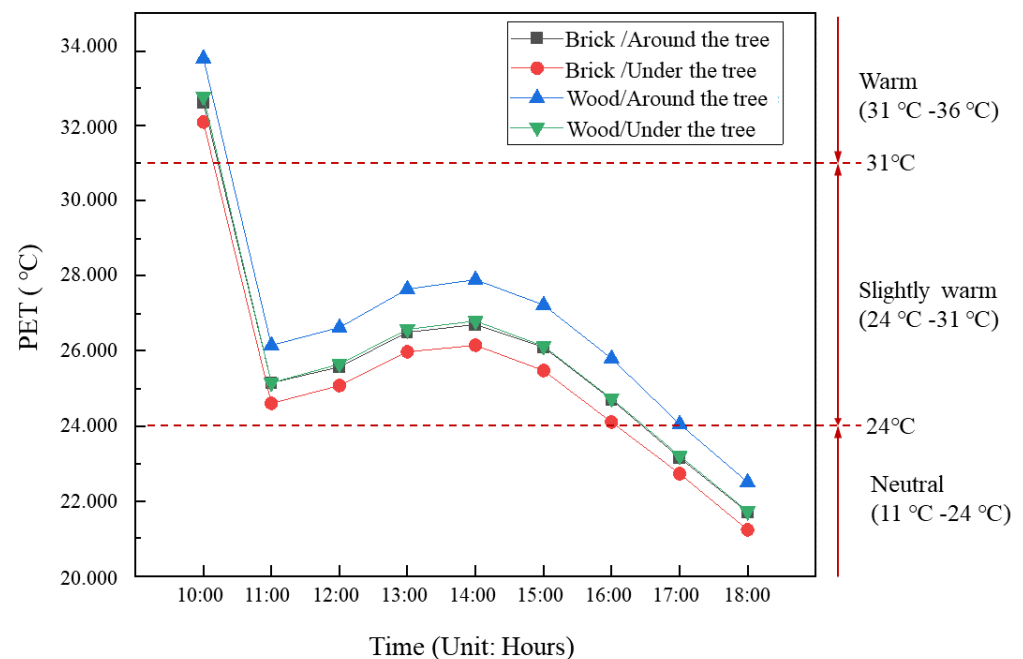


Figure 9. Thermal comfort evaluation of PET.

During the field survey, it was observed that people's rest and recreation activities mainly revolved around the ginkgo tree. The shade provided by the ginkgo tree played a significant role in environmental improvement.

However, the simulation showed that replacing the existing ground with wood would have a negative impact on the environment, leading to increased temperatures. In the process of urbanization, changes in ground cover can increase ground radiation, resulting in higher local temperatures. This, in turn, affects the overall comfort.

In many rural revitalization cases in Weihai, there is a common trend of using treated wood for aesthetic purposes. Unfortunately, this practice can lead to temperature increases [89] and is challenging to maintain [90], with construction costs. Through on-site visits and discussions, it was observed that the construction cost of wood planks in Weihai ranges from RMB 270 to 700 per square meter, significantly higher than the cost of brick construction, which ranges from RMB 60 to 400 per square meter. In future designs, it is essential to remind designers not to focus solely on short-term aesthetic improvements but also to consider long-term factors such as construction costs, maintenance requirements, and environmental impacts to ensure sustainable rural development.

For quantitative purposes, the current coverage rate of the scenic park in Wawuzhuang is as follows (Table 8).

Table 8. The current coverage rate of the scenic park.

	Lawn	Shade Trees	Paving (Brick)	Soil	Seating
Percentage	36.75%	18.15%	39.86%	13.65%	3.21%

The 500-year-old ginkgo tree in Wawuzhuang Village is a unique feature not found in every village, but a similar aesthetic can be achieved by planting multiple trees in the area, and due to the pursuit of auspiciousness in traditional Chinese culture, planting trees with auspicious meanings would make it more attractive for people to visit.

The current coverage rate is sufficient to meet the needs of both villagers and tourists. Although residents and tourists have expressed higher expectations, the status quo is considered satisfactory in terms of current satisfaction levels.

Additionally, as some villagers bring their portable seats to green spaces for relaxation, and the survey results indicated that villagers' satisfaction with seating was slightly

lower than with other elements, this suggests that the number of seats should exceed this proportion in future designs.

Combining the above findings with the on-site interviews, it can be observed that the current scenic park situation in Wawuzhuang Village can meet the needs of villagers and tourists. Both villagers and tourists have suggested points for improvement, such as adding more seating and enhancing cultural connections with the nearby art gallery.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Implications for Daily Life

We delve into the perspectives of local villagers and new residents who have a deep and intimate connection with scenic parks. Their insights provide a comprehensive understanding of how these spaces are woven into the fabric of daily life and have cultural significance within the community.

Within the village, new residents with diverse sources of income unrelated to agriculture have been settling in. These new residents vary in terms of their occupations, education levels, incomes, and cultural awareness. Establishing personal relationships between the new residents and original inhabitants takes time and requires appropriate settings. A scenic park is an excellent choice for this integration [5].

The primary users of the scenic park are elderly people who frequently bring their grandchildren to enjoy the area and pass the time. Due to a shortage of public seating, some people bring their own stools, while others sit by the flower beds. Common time periods for usage include after breakfast and before lunch, during the period after lunch until the early evening, but rarely in the evening due to the presence of mosquitoes and insufficient outdoor lighting.

Communication among the local villagers is very frequent. However, interactions with tourists and new villagers are infrequent due to language issues. Below are some villager interviews.

“It’s not that we are opposed to visitors coming to rest; we welcome them. But conversations with tourists are limited due to language barriers. While we might answer their questions as best as we can, communication can be challenging. We primarily speak our local dialect, which many tourists do not understand.” (Bi, aged 61 and above)

“We do visit the art museum, but we admit that we don’t fully understand art. The COVID-19 pandemic had led to strict controls in the village, and as a result, there had been few visitors. Now that COVID-19 has ended, we hope that more young people will come here in the future.” (Wang, aged 51–60)

However, it is critical to recognize that villagers’ perceptions of COVID-19’s impact on visitor numbers are inherently subjective. These perceptions are shaped by personal experiences, emotional responses, and potentially exaggerated expectations of village revitalization outcomes. In addition, external factors such as the region’s cold climate and the timing of the study, conducted in 2024 before the peak tourist season, may have also significantly influenced visitor patterns. These elements suggest that the observed trends may vary, highlighting the importance of considering both personal and environmental factors when applying the findings in future research.

However, their enthusiasm and anticipation for new villagers and visitors visiting the scenic park underscore their desire to enhance the village’s vitality through communication and interaction.

Zhao, aged 31–40, who moved into the village, noted the following: *“Since moving to the countryside, we’ll surely sit under the ginkgo tree for a while. The people in the village are very down-to-earth, but we really can’t understand their dialect, making communication quite challenging.”* Both new villagers and tourists use the landscape park for relaxation. New villagers also express their intention to engage in brief exercises at the park, believing that it contributes to their physical well-being, despite its limited extent. They feel that more interaction or joint activities with existing villagers would add more meaning to their rural

living experience. They also aspire to contribute to the revitalization of the village, as the vibrancy of the rural community would in turn have a positive impact on their daily lives.

Incorporating visitor feedback, the following comments reflect the impressions of tourists who have experienced the scenic park. *“Great atmosphere, the ancient ginkgo trees create a wonderful ambiance, allowing us to connect with nature. It’s heartwarming to see elderly people relaxing under the trees with their grandchildren; it offers a taste of the tranquility of rural life.”* (Wang, aged 31–40) *“The visit provides a brief respite from daily routines. If given the chance, I would love to return to see the ginkgo trees again and capture their beauty in photographs. However, I wish there was more interactive content between the ginkgo tree park and the art museum; it feels like a missed opportunity.”* (Ma, aged 21–30)

The scenic park has the potential to foster cultural fusion and stimulate the possibility of spatial reorganization [91] within its surroundings. This suggests that as people from various backgrounds and age groups converge in this communal area, there is an opportunity for diverse cultural influences to intermingle. In particular, in villages involved in tourism-driven rural revitalization, there is a greater variety of people associated with scenic parks. This interaction may lead to a reconfiguration of the way space is used and experienced, influencing the design and dynamics of the green space. The shared experience within the scenic park could contribute to a sense of unity among the community members, resulting in the emergence of new social and cultural connections. There is even a possibility that this will further affect the planning of rural dwellings, which can already be detected in some villages in Weihai.

Furthermore, during the interview process, it became clear that while younger villagers exhibit a more conscious approach toward low-carbon practices, older villagers tend to have limited awareness of low-carbon concepts. However, it is noteworthy that the frugal lifestyles of older villagers are indirectly consistent with the principles of low-carbon living. Undoubtedly, the provision of a comfortable scenic park plays a pivotal role in promoting low-carbon awareness on various fronts. The study’s exploration of low-carbon aspects will be further expanded in subsequent research efforts to delve deeper into these dynamics and bridge the generational gap in low-carbon understanding and practice.

4.2. The Implications for Rural Revitalization

In this study, we categorize rural parks into three types: policy promotion, scenic, and utilitarian based on the field survey. Our analysis focuses on scenic parks, providing valuable insights into the design and policy-making processes of rural revitalization. The design of rural parks should include ample seating and greenery to ensure user comfort, promote cultural exchange, and address site selection with attention to convenience and privacy. During the field survey, it was also found that the suggestions that people had for improving the park were mainly related to cultural connections. It was emphasized that rural parks do not require overly complex features, driven by considerations of cost maintenance. Due to cultural differences and historical backgrounds, rural parks generally do not consider mixed-use configurations, but focus more on leisure and agricultural support functions. However, despite funding limitations that often limit the versatility of rural parks, the adoption of mixed-use configurations could address a broader range of uses, potentially leading to cost savings in actual operations. Although mixed-use is currently uncommon in rural areas, as socioeconomic conditions evolve and cultural perceptions change, villagers’ and tourists’ demand for park facilities is likely to change. Future research and designs could focus on this trend to explore more flexible uses of parks, which could significantly contribute to the sustainable development of rural revitalization.

In our study area, there was no evidence of public participation in park construction during field surveys, likely due to the lack of time or budget. Given that community park design internationally involves a public participation process, we asked participants during interviews if they would like to be involved in the design process. Older respondents expressed a lack of interest, possibly due to a lower level of awareness of public participation. Younger respondents, however, expressed a willingness to participate if given the

opportunity, believing that such involvement would likely result in parks that better meet their needs.

This presents new challenges for future rural park construction. Going forward, governments and design firms will need to educate the public about the importance of participation in design processes and develop different participation strategies for residents of different ages and educational backgrounds. For older residents, meetings may need to be organized using simplified language and support tools, while for younger or more tech-savvy individuals, digital tools and social media platforms may generate greater interest. By involving the public in the design and construction of rural parks, the public's sense of belonging to the park will be enhanced. The parks will be more likely to meet user needs, improve park utilization, and enhance the revitalizing impact of these spaces, thus supporting sustainable development.

5. Conclusions

This study validates the existing scenic park in Wawuzhuang Village and fills a significant research gap by focusing on ordinary rural daily life parks. By adopting a comprehensive research methodology, this study fills the gap in understanding the dynamics of such parks. While the current study was conducted in Weihai, it is important to acknowledge that the findings and methods may not be universally applicable. The specific cultural, environmental, and social contexts of Weihai may differ significantly from other regions. Given the consistent lifestyle habits in rural areas of cold northern regions, we cautiously speculate that our research may serve as a reference for future studies and the construction of similar parks in areas with comparable geographical and cultural contexts. However, further empirical studies are needed to substantiate this speculation and assess the applicability of our findings in different rural settings. This approach will ensure that the benefits observed in Wawuzhuang Village can guide broader rural development strategies without overextending the immediate applicability of the findings.

It was found that the current state of the scenic park can indeed meet the needs of both villagers and tourists. However, there are still factors in the park that can be enhanced. For example, strengthening cultural connections, considering mixed uses, and public participation in the future construction process. This provides a valuable reference model for future design and policy formulation.

Due to economic disparities, there is a significant gap in living standards between rural and urban areas [92], and it is unrealistic to expect rural areas to achieve the same living standards as urban areas in a short period of time. However, through effective design and cost control, rural areas can achieve satisfaction in their living standards.

It is worth noting that this study has limited proposals for improving scenic park functionality, primarily focusing on a typical rural scenic park as a case study. The current research considers cultural elements, scenic park hardware elements (seating, lawn and shade trees, paving), and satisfaction factors. However, due to the traditional culture and lifestyle in rural China, plants with auspicious meanings, ample seating, and cultural connections help to increase the usage rate of scenic parks. Although this may limit the improvement of park functions, these elements are more feasible in most rural parks given the tight construction budgets.

Future research will extend to other villages and explore whether there are additional new elements to gather more comprehensive data. A more in-depth investigation into the influence of parks will be conducted, employing more mesh refinement to examine the spatial impact of parks. This approach will facilitate the understanding of the influence of parks on people's lifestyles and provide further insights into rural development. It will also be combined with factors such as low-carbon awareness and behaviors to explore the design and construction of scenic parks. The aim is to improve the value of parks in rural areas and achieve sustainable development.

The establishment of a comfortable scenic park demonstrates its ability to influence the daily lives of villagers and can also attract tourists. This influence extends to communication

patterns and changes in living habits, contributing to reducing cultural disparities between rural and urban areas. This harmonious fusion of rural and urban elements will significantly contribute to a more effective rural revitalization process, thereby enhancing the holistic development of rural regions.

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