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The Cultural-Tourism Transformation of Industrial Heritage: Drivers, Construction, Mediatization and Value - A Case Study of Hechai 1972 Cultural and Creative Park

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Abstract

Background: Driven by the wave of post-industrial transformation, cities worldwide are undergoing a structural evolution from “production-oriented spaces” to “cultural consumption spaces.” As an important component of urban stock spaces, the spatial and value transformation of industrial heritage has gradually become a significant issue in urban renewal and cultural regeneration. **Methods:** This paper takes Hechai 1972 Cultural and Creative Park as the research object. Based on the spatial characteristics, cultural scenes, and media communication elements of industrial heritage, and utilizing field interviews, data analysis, and dimensional evaluation, it employs spatial production theory, scene theory, and spatial media theory as analytical threads to examine the overall evolutionary logic and value of industrial heritage transformation into cultural and creative industries, encompassing “driving factors—production logic—scene construction—spatial mediatization.” **Findings:** In the process of industrial heritage transformation for cultural tourism, spatial production drives the evolution of industrial heritage and dominates the underlying logic; the construction of new and diverse scenes creates new cultural tensions in the city; digital communication catalyzes the reproduction of spatial mediatization. The overall evolutionary path presents a spiral development process of “spatial attribute transformation—spatial production—scene construction—spatial mediatization,” demonstrating a coupling mechanism of multiple spatial production types ranging from spatial regeneration to cultural value addition and then to symbolic communication. **Discussion:** The research object exhibits issues such as weak spatial knowledge attributes and educational potential, a lack of profound cultural connotations in scene construction, an inadequate social participation mechanism, and relatively singular subjects in spatial governance. The paper proposes policy and operational recommendations for deepening histori-

cal education functions, strengthening cultural rootedness, and constructing a co-governance mechanism with multi-stakeholder participation.

Full Text

The Cultural and Tourism Transformation of Industrial Heritage: Drivers, Constructions, Mediations, and Values — A Case Study of Hechai 1972 Creative Park

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Abstract

Background: Driven by the wave of post-industrial transformation, cities worldwide are experiencing a structural shift from “productive spaces” to “cultural consumption spaces.” As an integral component of urban stock spaces, industrial heritage has increasingly become a focal point in urban regeneration and cultural revitalization, with its spatial and value transformations emerging as key research topics.

Methods: This study takes Hechai 1972 Creative Park as a case, examining its spatial characteristics, cultural scenes, and media communication elements. Employing field interviews, data analysis, and multidimensional evaluation, and drawing on spatial production theory, scene theory, and spatial media theory, it analyzes the overall transformation logic and value of industrial heritage in its transition toward the cultural and creative industries, framed as “driving forces–production logic–scene construction–spatial mediation.”

Findings: In the cultural and tourism transformation of industrial heritage, spatial production drives and dominates the transformation logic; the construction of diverse old–new scenes generates new urban cultural tensions; and digital communication fosters the mediated reproduction of space. The overall transformation path presents a spiral development process of “spatial attribute transformation–spatial production–scene construction–spatial mediation,” reflecting a coupling mechanism of multiple types of spatial production that progress from spatial regeneration to cultural value enhancement and symbolic dissemination.

Discussion: The case reveals several challenges, including the weak knowledge attributes and educational potential of space, insufficient depth in cultural scene construction, and underdeveloped social participation mechanisms with relatively singular governance actors. Policy and operational recommendations are proposed to strengthen historical education functions, enhance cultural embeddedness, and build co-governance mechanisms involving diverse stakeholders.

Keywords: industrial heritage; cultural creativity; spatial production; scene construction; spatial mediation

1.1 Research Background and Problem Statement

In the wake of post-industrial transformation, cities worldwide are undergoing a structural evolution from “productive spaces” to “cultural consumption spaces.” As a crucial component of urban stock space, industrial heritage is no longer merely a relic of history but has become a regenerative spatial practice and cultural scene. Its value has shifted from traditional historical memory toward a composite expression encompassing socio-cultural and economic functions (Chen Bo & Chen Lihao, 2023) [1]. Cases such as Germany’s Ruhr region and London’s Thames Docklands demonstrate that the redevelopment of industrial heritage not only promotes the multifunctional reconstruction of urban space but also facilitates the reconstruction of local cultural identity and social identification (Carlsen et al., 2003) [2].

In China, with the deepening integration of “culture + tourism” strategies, industrial heritage tourism has gradually moved beyond the path of “single protection + superficial display” into a stage of deep activation characterized by “scene creation—narrative participation—media dissemination.” Typical examples such as Beijing’s 798 Art District, Chengdu’s East Suburb Memory, and Jingdezhen’s ceramic factories have all achieved transformation from “industrial ruins” to “cultural hubs” through spatial design and cultural content reshaping. In recent years, the deep involvement of media geography and platform communication has made industrial heritage not only a space to “visit” but also a content venue that can be “viewed, photographed, and shared,” emphasizing a new connection between “space—experience—identity—communication” (Zhao, 2022) [3]; (McQuire, 2008) [4].

However, existing research has primarily focused on spatial morphological renewal and visual symbol reconstruction, lacking a deep synthesis of spatial generation mechanisms and cultural scene values, and rarely addressing how media coordinates the entire process of “production—construction—communication.” Therefore, it is necessary to construct a composite research framework integrating spatial production theory, cultural scene theory, and media geography to systematically reveal the transformation logic and value of industrial heritage cultural tourism: drivers—construction—mediation.

1.2 Research Objectives and Core Questions

This study takes Hechai 1972 Creative Park in Hefei (hereinafter referred to as Hechai 1972) as a typical case, focusing on the spatial reproduction logic and media expression pathways in its transformation process as a “dual-attribute space of industry and prison.” Based on spatial production theory (Lefebvre, 1991) [5], scene theory (Clark, 2010) [6], and media geography perspectives (Adams, 2009) [7] (McQuire, 2009) [4], this paper constructs a three-dimensional analyt-

ical framework of “spatial production—scene construction—spatial mediation” to systematically address the following core questions: (1) Spatial dimension: How does the park achieve the transition from “industrial space” and “confined space” to “cultural living space”? (2) Cultural dimension: How does its cultural scene construction mobilize “amenities” and spatial atmosphere to generate tourists’ cultural identification and emotional resonance? (3) Media dimension: Under digital platform participation, how does the park reconstruct its media dissemination pathways and achieve cultural labeling? (4) Comprehensive dimension: What are the cultural, economic, and social values of this transformation practice, and what implications does it hold for the cultural tourism transformation of industrial heritage cities in China?

1.3 Research Significance

Theoretically, this paper attempts to address the insufficient discussion of the coupling mechanism among “space—culture—media” in current industrial heritage research. It proposes an analytical framework based on “spatial production—scene construction—spatial mediation,” theoretically breaking through disciplinary bottlenecks and forming a multi-dimensional, progressive analytical framework to systematically construct a theoretical research path for heritage cultural tourism transformation. Practically, as a typical sample of “prison-type industrial heritage,” Hechai 1972’s analysis of its spatial production motivations, cultural scene construction, and spatial mediation provides an operational paradigm reference for the reuse, element construction, and communication mechanisms of similar venues.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 International Research Progress

With the evolution from industrial civilization to post-industrial society, the transformation of industrial heritage has gradually become an important issue in urban renewal and cultural regeneration. Early research focused on the tourism function positioning and urban redevelopment pathways of industrial heritage. Edwards et al. (1996) emphasized the role of industrial heritage tourism in activating idle spaces and revitalizing local economies, pointing out the significance of community participation in heritage revitalization [8]. Binns et al. (2003) proposed linking “industrial heritage—ecological restoration—cultural memory” for tourism development, establishing interactive mechanisms between local governments, community organizations, and markets to reshape local economic foundations [9]. Carlsen (2003) proposed that “Mega-Events” could serve as a “trigger” for urban redevelopment, facilitating urban renewal and image reconstruction in industrial wasteland areas and reshaping urban spatial brands [10].

In recent years, research has trended toward multidimensional integration. Ashworth (2019) further proposed the concept of “Dissonant Heritage,” revealing the multiple narratives and identity politics within heritage spaces [11]. Techno-

logically, Basheer et al. (2023) analyzed the application effectiveness of AR/VR technology in immersive experiences of industrial heritage from a systematic review perspective, providing theoretical support for spatial digitization [12]. In terms of spatial communication, McQuire (2016) proposed the “Geomedia” theory, pointing out that media technology is reconstructing urban spatial perception structures and public participation methods [13].

2.1.2 Domestic Research Progress

Domestic academic attention to industrial heritage tourism began around 2000, focusing on development types, resource distribution, model exploration, and value assessment, which has remained the main thread of industrial heritage tourism research. Ding Shu (2005) proposed three development models—“professional, comprehensive, and park types”—emphasizing spatial utilization and resource efficiency [14]. Han Fuwen et al. (2010) analyzed the spatial distribution of industrial heritage in Northeast China and its relationship with tourism development, concluding that a point-axis radiation development model should be adopted to connect major industrial cities [15]. Tong Yuquan (2010) constructed an economic benefit evaluation model for industrial heritage, verifying its role in stimulating local economies [16]. Wang Jing and Li Hao (2012) identified urban industrial heritage protection and renewal as an important pathway for building creative cities [18]. Zhang Jingjing et al. (2015) examined the coupling coordination relationship among resource value, development, and tourism in industrial heritage [17].

After 2020, research gradually shifted toward cultural identity and spatial narrative. Wang Tao et al. (2021) introduced scene theory to study industrial heritage cultural and creative parks, using multiple indicators and models to explore the spatial characteristics and influencing factors of industrial land renewal in Guangzhou [19]. Fu Caiwu et al. (2021) discussed how scene-based consumption reshapes cultural experiences and urban nighttime economic spaces through the case of Changsha’s “Super Wenheryou” [20]. Chen Bo et al. (2023) constructed a three-dimensional scene evaluation model of “physical—spiritual—social” through the case of Taoxichuan Creative Park, deepening understanding of industrial heritage cultural scene construction [1].

Additionally, domestic scholars have explored spatial perception, cultural symbols, and localization. Li Xiaoyun et al. (2021) analyzed industrial heritage renewal strategies based on “place-event” theory, examining the historical, technological, cultural, social, and artistic values and practical significance of industrial heritage [21]. Wang Li (2021) revealed the symbolic meaning of industrial heritage through semiotic analysis, proposing a protection and reuse strategy centered on cultural symbols [22]. In terms of locality, Fan Xiaojun et al. (2020) proposed identification between temporal-spatial contexts and place and interaction with daily life to achieve value and meaning inheritance [23].

These studies have conducted in-depth research on the transformation and de-

velopment of industrial heritage cultural tourism from different perspectives, but have not yet systematically analyzed the path of spatial transformation and qualitative evolution of industrial heritage.

2.2.1 Current Research Gaps

Despite the rich achievements from different perspectives on industrial heritage cultural tourism transformation, with overall continuous deepening, the following shortcomings remain: First, research dimensions are relatively dispersed, lacking an integrated perspective of “space—scene—media” as a trinity; second, most studies still borrow from Western theoretical frameworks, with insufficient response to the “state—capital—community” ternary structure in the Chinese urban context, particularly weak discussions on local identity and spatial power negotiation mechanisms; third, cases targeting heritage transformation with dual “industrial + rule of law” attributes are extremely scarce, and the spatial, identity, and emotional evolution paths of prison-type industrial heritage have not been deeply studied.

2.2.2 Research Entry Point

Addressing the above gaps, this paper takes Hechai 1972 as a case and proposes the following innovations: First, theoretically integrating spatial production theory (Lefebvre, 1991) [5], cultural scene theory (Clark, 2010) [6], and media geography theory (Adams, 2009) [7] (McQuire, 2008) [4] to construct a three-dimensional analytical path of “spatial production—scene construction—spatial mediation”; second, methodologically combining POI big data, field interviews, and quantitative scene dimension analysis to deeply parse the interactive logic between spatial production and cultural scenes; third, in terms of case type, systematically studying for the first time the cultural tourism transformation path of “prison-type industrial heritage,” filling a theoretical gap in domestic special heritage transformation practice.

2.3.1 Theoretical Selection and Applicability

The cultural tourism transformation of industrial heritage is not a single-dimensional spatial reuse process but a systematic evolution of spatial meaning under the interweaving of cultural, economic, media, and other multiple logics. Traditional industrial heritage research has focused on cultural protection, architectural renovation, or tourism development, neglecting the dynamic reconstruction of space itself in social relations, production mechanisms, and communication contexts (Hospers, 2002) [24].

In the context of consumer society, transformed industrial spaces are not only “objects to be used” but also cultural scenes that are “narrated and disseminated.” Therefore, this paper employs spatial production theory, scene theory, and media geography theory to construct a four-stage path of “spatial attribute drive—spatial production—scene construction—mediated reproduction.” This

not only reveals how industrial heritage completes the transformation from abandoned space to cultural capital but also demonstrates how space achieves value and meaning rebirth through the interaction of policy, capital, community, and media.

2.3.2 Theoretical Analysis Path

(1) Transformation Motivation: From Functional to Cultural Attribute Conversion

The first step in industrial heritage space transformation begins with the internal evolution of spatial attributes. Traditional industrial spaces possess characteristics of closure, discipline, and functional orientation. However, against the backdrop of industrial restructuring and the rise of consumer society, their physical attributes and social roles change simultaneously. Harvey pointed out that urban space is constantly being “re-valued” under capitalist logic, with its original use value gradually giving way to symbolic and cultural value (Harvey, 2006) [25]. In the tourism context, industrial spaces gain new cultural interpretation logic through the reconstruction of cultural narratives, thereby transforming into symbolic places of collective memory (Zukin, 1995) [26]. This stage constitutes the prerequisite for spatial reproduction and the foundation for the intervention of cultural scenes and media dissemination.

(2) Spatial Production: Spatial Reconstruction Under Social Relations

Neo-Marxist urban geography points out that spatial production is the result of negotiation among power, capital, and culture (Ye Chao et al., 2011) [27]. In cultural tourism practice, the “production” of space includes the reuse of land resources (capital-oriented), the reorganization of socio-cultural discourse (policy-oriented), and the re-implantation of local identity (community-oriented). The process of spatial production is precisely the process of spatial power reconfiguration.

Space is not a neutral container but a product of social practice. Lefebvre proposed the “spatial triad” theory (Lefebvre, 1991) [5]. The transformation of industrial heritage is a typical process of spatial reproduction: government policies and development capital redefine spatial functions and connotations (representations of space); cultural activities, exhibition formats, and public openness within the park reflect the transformed spatial practice in reality; while tourists and residents participate in the construction of spatial meaning through narrative, experience, and re-dissemination (representational space). This stage connects the “material spatial attributes” with “human social practice,” representing the core of transformation from static space to dynamic social scenes.

(3) Pluralistic Scene Construction: Spatial Mechanism Construction for Cultural Experience

Based on spatial attribute transformation and spatial production, industrial heritage needs to achieve cultural perception through “scene reconstruction.” Scene

theory emphasizes that urban space is not only a physical structure but also a stage for cultural performance and daily life (Lash & Urry, 1991) [28]. Clark (2001-2003) [29] calls cities “entertainment machines,” pointing out that contemporary urban spaces construct sensory immersion and emotional resonance through “theatricality, authenticity, and legitimacy.”

Scene construction in industrial heritage is no longer passive display of historical symbols but active embedding of “cultural installations” within consumer logic, forming multi-dimensional experiential spaces. Nostalgia, aesthetics, and participation become the main construction dimensions, transforming space into an experiential venue that is “perceptible, narratable, and consumable.” This part serves as the transformation mechanism between “space and culture” and the intermediary platform for entering media dissemination.

(4) Spatial Mediation: From Geographic Location to Communication Node

Based on scene construction, media logic further pushes industrial heritage space toward a new dimension of “symbolization and communication.” Two representative scholars of media geography, McQuire and Adams, respectively propose: media not only operates in space but also participates in the construction and meaning attribution of space itself (McQuire, 2008) [4]; the value of media in reshaping spatial perception and geographic cognition is irreplaceable (Adams, 2009) [7]. Xie Qinlu (2018) points out that “spatial mediation” is a spatial reproduction mechanism achieved through digital platforms, image narratives, and user participation [30].

In the process of industrial heritage cultural tourism transformation, space is imaged and labeled through social media platforms, forming communicable cultural landmarks. Tourists are no longer just experiencers but also participants in UGC (user-generated content). The perception path of space expands from offline to online, and its cultural influence and dissemination power grow exponentially through mediation. At this point, space is not only a geographic entity but also becomes a “cultural scene” and “urban cultural transmitter.” Thus, industrial heritage completes the cultural tourism transformation process of spatial functionalization (materiality)—spatial scenification (culturality)—spatial mediation (communicability).

2.3.3 Summary of Analysis Path

The advantage of this path lies in its integration of neo-Marxist urban theory (Harvey, 1973) [31] (Lefebvre, 1991) [5], cultural sociology theory (Clark, 2003) [29], and cross-perspectives from media geography (Adams, 2009) [7] (McQuire, 2008) [4], systematically integrating the social transformation, scene reconstruction, and media communication logic of industrial heritage space. It is applicable for analyzing how large numbers of industrial heritage spaces facing transformation in contemporary Chinese cities evolve into new types of cultural spaces integrating “cultural memory, scene consumption, and symbolic dissemination,”

providing theoretical support and methodological pathways for understanding contemporary heritage tourism spatial practice (Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]).

Figure 1: Research Path Diagram (Author’s Creation)

3. Research Design and Methods

3.1 Case Selection

Hechai 1972 Creative Park is located in Baohe District, Hefei City, Anhui Province, covering approximately 430 mu with a total investment of about 3.5 billion RMB and a total construction area of about 300,000 square meters, including 220,000 square meters above ground (60,000 square meters of renovated old buildings and 160,000 square meters of new construction) [32].

Since 1954, the site first served as Hefei Prison. In 1964, Hefei Brick and Tile Factory relocated here, and in 1972, Hefei Diesel Engine Factory was launched. In 1996, it transformed into Hefei Light Industry Manufacturing Plant, while its legal function remained unchanged throughout normal industrial production. It belongs to the typical “prison-type” industrial heritage, possessing dual “industrial—rule of law” attributes with complex spatial connotations and strong symbolic tension. Since its transformation into a creative park in 2018, the park has introduced various functions including cultural creativity, art exhibitions, and leisure entertainment while preserving the original prison-industrial building structures, successfully achieving the transition from “industrial production space” and “confined space” to “open space,” becoming one of the core nodes in Hefei’s urban cultural tourism system. Its main research value is reflected in three aspects: first, the scarcity of heritage type—prison + industrial heritage, with extremely rare physical spatial forms and connotations; second, the complexity of transformation model—Hechai 1972 integrates multiple functions including creativity, exhibitions, commerce, public leisure, education, and residence, achieving comprehensive coverage from production to living functions and embodying almost all element attributes of a comprehensive cultural tourism community; third, the typicality of media dissemination—the cultural conflict between the original “prison + industrial” identity and the new “cultural creativity + consumption” identity itself possesses strong spatial media communication properties.

3.2 Data Sources and Collection Methods

(1) First-hand field research data. Through five rounds of field visits to Hechai 1972 from August 2023 to November 2024, information on tourist trajectories, business formats, and building uses was collected, with 32 interviews conducted covering operators, cultural merchants, tourists, and surrounding residents.

(2) Secondary platform data and policy documents. POI (Point of In-

terest) information within the park, including names and formats of various institutions, was collected based on Amap API. Tourist UGC content (text + images) was captured from platforms such as Dianping, Mafengwo, and Xiaohongshu, with Python used for high-frequency word statistics and image content classification analysis.

(3) Policy documents and online literature. These auxiliary materials help understand the planning and policy support context of Hechai Park (hefei.gov.cn, 2020) [33] (planning.cn) [32].

3.3.1 Interviews and Observations

The deep interview method was employed to obtain spatial experiences and value cognition from operators and users. The observation method focused on tourists' behavioral paths and social interactions in space, identifying the degree of fit between spatial data information and tourist behavior (Zheng, 2022) [34]. Through inductive discourse analysis and observation notes, dimensional analysis of spatial function transformation was conducted.

3.3.2 Social Data Mining Analysis

Crawler technology was used to capture Xiaohongshu notes containing the keyword "Hechai 1972" from January 2022 to November 2024, obtaining 834 valid texts and 562 images. Python was used for word frequency analysis to obtain high-frequency vocabulary of tourist online themes, identifying emotional tendencies of keywords and media dissemination paths, and assisting in understanding the shaping significance of media on space (Wang, 2023) [35].

3.3.3 POI Analysis and Expert Scoring

Based on Amap API, POI information within the park was collected. Combined with interview data, a scene perception indicator system was constructed according to "cultural amenity" theory (Table 2). Seven experts in urban planning and tourism research were invited to conduct itemized evaluations, forming a scoring matrix for subsequent statistical analysis and cluster classification (Table 3).

4. Empirical Analysis and Conclusions

4.1 Spatial Production Logic and Value

The spatial transformation of Hechai 1972 is a spiral progressive process triggered by driving factors, initiated by spatial practice, constructed by spatial representation, and characterized by representation and media dissemination, with each stage mutually supporting one another.

(1) Motivation Trigger: Driving Mechanism and Spatial Practice Initiation

The primary starting point of spatial production lies in the dual drive of social function and economic capital (Lefebvre, 1991) [5]. China's economic structural adjustment and industrial upgrading have made the cultural and creative industry an important growth point; meanwhile, land capital operations in the urbanization process drive the transformation of original low-efficiency industrial land into high-value cultural and creative land (Harvey, 2006) [36]. Hechai 1972 is precisely at this intersection, with its transformation from prison and factory to cultural and creative park driven by both industrial demand and land capital. Additionally, policy support and urban planning orientation provide institutional guarantees for the initiation of spatial practice, gradually opening the park from a closed production space to a public, multifunctional cultural space.

(2) Spatial Practice: Functional Diversification and Open Interaction

Under motivation drive, Hechai 1972's spatial practice demonstrates a triple structure: 1) Functional leap: transformation from production type (factory, prison) to cultural leisure type (exhibitions, cultural creativity, performances, markets); 2) Open sharing: the park gradually opens free to the public, forming an interactive platform for commerce, exhibitions, entertainment, public affairs, education, and life; 3) Scene experience integration: multiple types of "cultural amenities" such as art galleries, handicraft workshops, and old factory relics are interwoven to meet multi-level needs of creators, tourists, and citizens.

This reconstruction at the practice level is not a single function superposition but interweaves among industry, publicness, and market mechanisms. The model of investment enterprises operating while constructing is the best interpretation of the spatial transformation process.

(3) Spatial Representation: Symbolization and Visual Identity Shaping

The material layout and functional settings generated by spatial practice provide a narrative foundation for spatial representation. The park retains original components such as high walls, chimneys, and mechanical equipment as the visual core of industrial heritage codes. Simultaneously, through graffiti, installation art, and cultural and creative exhibitions, the space is "symbolized" in the market context, presenting a mixed image of "nostalgia—visual consumption—artistry" (Zukin, 1995) [37]. Such representation not only provides tourists with identified spaces for check-ins but also constructs a symbolic image of "industrial style + artistic atmosphere," achieving the intersection of historical memory and modern consumption.

(4) Representation and Dissemination: Identity and Diffusion

The representational space characteristic is the result of spatial practice and spatial representation: that is, a scene of public perception and cultural identity. At this level, "collective memory" and "modern experience" intertwine: older generations of citizens resonate through memories of industrial development, while new-generation tourists endow the space with "art + check-in" significance through self-media photography and short video sharing (McQuire, 2008) [4].

Dissemination on social media platforms strengthens the park’s scene image and visual symbols, forming a cultural community identity scene labeled Hechai 1972 (Zheng, 2022) [38]. This process precisely embodies the transformation from spatial representation to spatial identity: space is no longer a static structure but becomes the protagonist of communication semantics (Fuchs, 2019) [39].

(5) Comprehensive Logic: Spiral Progression of Spatial Production

The above four stages do not unfold linearly but are mutually supportive and progressive processes: (1) spatial motivation triggers spatial practice initiation; (2) spatial practice provides material foundation for spatial representation generation; (3) spatial representation forms representational spatial images (Table 1); (4) spatial cognition and emotional value are reproduced through media dissemination; (5) simultaneously, this reinforces the continuous effect of spatial practice and future motivation. From a complete perspective, Hechai 1972’s transformation is a spiral progression process of “drive—practice—representation—dissemination” spatial reproduction.

Table 1: Spatial Production Transformation Intention Model

Spatial Triad Model	Representational Space	Spatial Practice	Represented Space
Prison→Factory→Creative Park	Coexistence of cultural creativity and industrial memory	Old citizens’ memory vs. young check-in imagery	Production→Cultural living space
Policy-led cultural renewal project	Tourist emotional identification + labels like “trendy,” “nostalgic,” “industrial style”	Closed→Open space transformation	Landmark urban spatial symbol design
New urban cultural landmark			

4.2.1 Sample Selection and Data Sources

It is generally believed that “amenity” in scene theory is a core concept, referring to the pleasant utility that goods and services bring to consumers in specific spaces. In cultural spaces, amenities are not merely facilities literally related to culture such as museums and cinemas but encompass almost all architectural facilities in urban space. Urban space is essentially a collection of experiences, symbols, and meanings, with different amenity combinations constituting scenes of different natures (Fu Caiwu, 2021) [20].

This study uses open-source POI data from Amap to capture amenities in and around Hechai 1972 Creative Park, combined with offline key informant inter-

views. Based on online POI data and interview data collection, through manual cleaning and sorting, 123 representative amenity data points were finally obtained (Table 2).

4.2.2 Scene Dimension Construction and Expert Evaluation

Based on the scientific scene theory framework, a multi-dimensional evaluation system was constructed using a two-round expert scoring method, achieving the transformation of tourism amenities into scene variables through qualitative and quantitative combination. The specific implementation process includes three key stages:

(1) Dimension System Construction Stage:

Grounded in international scene theory paradigms and combined with characteristics of spatial production in China's industrial heritage tourism, an industrial heritage tourism scene dimension model was innovatively constructed, with Hechai 1972 as the empirical research object to complete amenity classification. Hechai 1972's amenities were divided into 8 major categories and 16 subcategories: dining/light meals, exhibitions/books, entertainment/experience, retail/life aesthetics, music/performance, creativity/office, media/wedding/photography, and living support. Overall, Hechai 1972 integrates multiple functions including cultural creativity, exhibitions, commerce, public leisure, education, and residence, achieving comprehensive coverage from production to living functions and embodying almost all cultural facilities of a comprehensive cultural tourism community (Table 2).

Table 2: Statistical Table of Representative Amenities in Hechai 1972 Creative Park (Author's Creation)

Amenity Category (8)	Amenity Names (123)	Quantity/Area
Dining Facilities	District Coffee, People's Cultural and Creative Bookstore Xiyuan Tea Space, HH-space, M Stand, Qiu Ming MOUNTAINTEA New Chinese Teahouse, Jia Shi Coffee, Xiao Guai La, Wei Jia Culture, Shi Ji Culture, Time Street...	7/12,000 m ²

Amenity Category (8)	Amenity Names (123)	Quantity/Area
Exhibition/Books	People's Cultural and Creative Bookstore, Wanxin Cultural Bookstore, Hefei Home Appliance Story Museum, Hefei Contemporary Art Museum Hall A/B, Yuanquan Museum, Time Exhibition Hall...	5/9,000 m ²
Entertainment/Experience	Wood Education Forest, Goodone Life Old Warehouse, 7C Skateboard Park, Big Gorilla's Box Comprehensive Sports Hall, CARPE DIEM Dream Beautiful Flower House, Xie Dian, Pearl Island ART STORE, San Er Yi Luzhou Dyeing, Glass Fragment Lampworking Art Studio, Hua Jian, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Academy...	26/18,000 m ²
Retail/Life Aesthetics	Bean Chai Cat Adoption Center, Xijian Flower Art...	
Music/Performance	Fanmu Art Center, π Factory, Yangying Fire Pond-Performance Area, 9 Live Jiulai Fu, People's Theater...	
Creativity/Office	EPAI Yipai Creative Space, Sanjie Office Area, Gongmei Design Alliance, Xiao Jun Mr. Brand Marketing Consulting Fuyao Studio, CHANANG Jewelry Space, Xikuang Architecture, Yimiao Art Design Office, Lai Architecture Design Studio...	

Amenity Category (8)	Amenity Names (123)	Quantity/Area
Media/Wedding/Photography	Xiao Man Photo Studio, Zhenxi Photography, Geleliya Art Center, POKEKIDS Shell Design Family Record Hall, No.1 Studio, TOUFU Photography Space, Zhongxia Qinhan, Yongyi Camera Shop, Shangu Design...	
Living Support	High walls, barbed wire, guard posts, labor reform slogans, diesel engine machine tools, sliced human body (outdoor art installation), jailbreak panda wall painting, event lawn, production slogans, work cards... Hechai Art Season, Hechai Urban Coffee Festival, Hechai Wild Market Neighborhood Center, Primary School, Taoranli (residential)...	

Data source: Collected from Amap, some amenities obtained through field research, collection date: November 15, 2024.

(2) Expert Evaluation Implementation Stage:

A 7-person expert team was formed to conduct two rounds of back-to-back evaluation. In the first round, experts independently scored 16 types of amenities based on 15-dimensional scoring standards: low scores (0-2.9) indicate insignificant dimensional characteristics; medium values (3.0-3.9) represent dimensional neutrality; high values (4.0-5.0) reflect significant dimensional characteristics. After scoring, a two-way verification mechanism was implemented, both horizontally verifying the logical consistency of scores for each dimension of a single amenity type and vertically comparing the systematic coordination of scores for various amenity types under a single dimension (Table 3).

(3) Data Optimization Analysis Stage:

Standard deviation analysis was used to identify evaluation disagreement items. After organizing in-depth interviews to eliminate cognitive differences,

secondary confirmation was implemented, ultimately forming a consensus matrix of dimensional scores. A weighted average algorithm was used to construct a 15-dimensional scene characteristic model, with the expression:

$$S_i = \frac{\sum_{x=1}^{N_x} f_x}{N_x}$$

where S_i is the scene score of dimension i , x is the cultural amenity, N_x is the number of amenities, and f_x is the score of amenity x in dimension i (Table 3).

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Cultural Scene Dimension Scores for Hechai 1972 Creative Park (Author's Creation)

Main Dimension	Sub-dimension	Representative Amenity Examples	Score
Spatial Dimension	Authenticity	Diesel engine machine tools, Hefei Contemporary Art Museum Hall A/B (structure), chimney, high walls, round fort, production slogans, work cards, labor reform slogans	3.4
	Traditionality	Time Exhibition Hall, Time Street, Hefei Home Appliance Story Museum	3.5
	Dailiness	Diesel engine machine tools, production slogans, work cards, labor reform slogans, Time Exhibition Hall	3.4
	Openness	Prison space transformation from "confined" to "open"	4.6
	Locality	Unique attributes and values belonging to this place	3.7
Cultural Dimension	Nostalgia	Hefei Contemporary Art Museum Hall A/B	4.3
	Symbolism	Goodone Life Old Warehouse, Time Street, Hefei Home Appliance Story Museum, chimney	4.1
	Aesthetics	Abstract representation of old industrial space characteristics and collective memory	4.4
	Entertainment	Hefei Contemporary Art Museum Hall A/B (structure), chimney, high walls, round fort...	4.5

Main Dimension	Sub-dimension	Representative Amenity Examples	Score
Social Dimension	Innovation Atmosphere	Various novel and peculiar scenes and entertainment activities	4.6
	Self-expression	Personalized scene expression status	4.3
	Egalitarianism	Various groups' spatial rights and equal opportunities for spatial participation	4.2
	Public Service	Providing non-discriminatory public services for various groups	4.2
Economic Value-added	Knowledge Dissemination	Social and cultural spatial media functions and attributes	4.4
	Cultural Capital	People's Cultural and Creative Bookstore, Wanxin Cultural Bookstore, Hefei Home Appliance Story Museum, Hefei Contemporary Art Museum Hall A/B, Yuanquan Museum	4.3

Note: This table references (Chen Bo & Chen Lihao, 2023) [1], with dimensions and classifications adjusted according to this case's specific circumstances.

4.2.3 Cultural Scene Analysis

(1) Spatial Dimension: Conflict Between Authenticity and Openness

This dimension focuses on the preservation of original industrial and prison spaces and social accessibility. Among them, “openness” scored the highest (4.6), indicating that the park achieved a typical transition from “confinement to openness” in spatial structure, with public space area exceeding 40% and most areas open to citizens free of charge, forming a spatial translation process of “institutional closure—urban sharing.” The park receives over 10,000 visitors daily during holidays, already possessing landmark openness characteristics. “Traditionality” (3.5) performed moderately, with some amenities reflecting local traditions and era memories, but insufficient traditionality before industrial site transformation. “Authenticity” (3.4) and “dailiness” (3.4) performed relatively average. On one hand, although physical structures like diesel engine workshops were preserved, the functionality and historical narrative inside the space are missing, with some industrial equipment forms being “hollowed out,” where symbolism far exceeds authentic process presentation. On the other hand, spaces for prisoners' daily reform, education, and life were not systematically preserved, with typical “rule of law spaces” such as cells, solitary confinement rooms, and

interrogation areas missing, failing to form a complete coherent spatial experience of “confinement—labor—education” (Table 3).

(2) Cultural Dimension: Symbiosis of Nostalgia and Entertainment

The cultural dimension is the core component of Hechai 1972’s cultural tourism appeal, with generally high scores. Particularly outstanding performance in “entertainment” (4.5), “innovation atmosphere” (4.6), and “aesthetics” (4.4) demonstrates a typical scene form of “new industrial aesthetics + urban consumption culture.” Performance spaces within the park enrich nighttime cultural tourism experiences, aligning with Clark’s definition of “dramatic scenes” (Clark, 2010) [6]; while handicraft studios, design institutions, and self-media spaces reflect a strong “individual expression” orientation (self-expression score 4.3), creating a “youthful, expressive, micro-community” structure (Zukin, 1995) [40]. Meanwhile, Goodone Old Warehouse and Home Appliance Story Museum achieve better performance in “nostalgia” (4.3) than “symbolism” (4.1) through the re-display of old objects, industrial furniture, and home appliance remains. “Locality” (3.7) is slightly weak, with current introduction of Anhui local culture still being symbolic rather than forming systematic cultural narratives. Some scenes rely more on generic “design—installation—cultural and creative consumption” templates, with insufficient presentation of local cultural values (Table 3).

(3) Social Dimension: Egalitarianism and Gentrification Risk

This dimension reflects the park’s social roles in publicness, equality, and knowledge dissemination functions. Evaluation shows both “egalitarianism” and “public service” scored 4.2, indicating relatively sufficient protection of basic cultural rights, such as free opening systems, open area ratios, citizen festival activities, and public reading spaces. However, noteworthy is the tension between “consumption threshold—spatial justice,” where the proportion of refined high-end business formats (such as mid-to-high-end dining and niche literary spaces) is increasing, triggering some “gentrification” risk.

In the “knowledge dissemination” dimension (score 4.4), People’s Cultural and Creative Bookstore, art museum, and museum form a relatively complete knowledge space ecology, though their interactivity could be enhanced. The economic value-added dimension also shows strong performance (score 4.3), indicating the park has become a platform for gathering cultural and creative economic capital (Table 3).

4.3 Spatial Mediation Logic and Value

As a typical “prison-type industrial heritage” space, Hechai 1972’s transformation from a productive, repressive closed space to an open, symbolic cultural and creative scene represents a typical “mediated spatial reproduction” process. Based on media geography theory, space is not merely an occupied container but a “social media” system embedded with communication, emotion, and power structures (McQuire, 2008) [41]. The generation path of Hechai 1972’s spatial

mediation can be specifically analyzed through the following three aspects:

4.3.1 Reconstruction of Spatial Media Attributes Media geography emphasizes that space is not only a physical container but also a media form that constructs social meaning and collective memory through visibility, accessibility, and narrativity (Adams, 2009) [42]. Hechai 1972’s spatial renewal is manifested not only in the restoration of physical structures but more importantly in the reorganization of its media attributes. At the visual level, “prison-like” objects such as high walls, barbed wire, guard posts, and old machine tools retained in the park have their original “repressive” connotations reconstructed by media into visual elements of “industrial style” narratives, becoming popular backgrounds for social media image dissemination (Adams, 2009) [43]. For example, round forts, chimneys, and prison gate corridors frequently appear on social platform cover images, constructing a nostalgic “ruins aesthetics” landscape.

Additionally, the re-encoding of spatial symbols also possesses mediality: the prison gate wall originally symbolizing “punishment” was painted with “jail-break pandas,” transforming into a representation of “artistic transgression.” This transformation is not only a playful change at the symbolic level but also reflects the shift of space from “functional place” to “representational node” under media logic. Its spatial meaning no longer attaches to industrial labor but embeds into a media production system centered on images, labels, and dissemination, becoming an important node in urban visual landscape and cultural consumption venues (Urry, 2002) [44].

4.3.2 Mediated Reproduction of Space The mediation of Hechai 1972 is not only reflected in the reorganization of visual images but more crucially in how it completes the reproduction of spatial meaning through digital platforms, user participation, and image co-creation mechanisms. This process demonstrates threefold media paths:

First is the labeling-driven spatial construction by platform algorithms. On platforms such as Xiaohongshu and Douyin, the park is frequently tagged with “industrial style check-in place,” “prison adventure site,” and “cultural and creative market,” with over ten thousand related images and short videos, driving the space to obtain high recognizability with specific symbolic images. These contents mostly revolve around highly recognizable scene settings, strengthening the spatial visual dimensions of “performative—personalized—communicable” (Clark, 2002) [45].

Second is the image co-creation mechanism between tourists and content producers. Tourists participate in spatial meaning reconstruction through selfies, filters, slow-motion shots, and other methods, transforming originally functional spaces into “media stages” that can be performed and encoded. In this process, space gradually becomes a reproducible and editable media node in the actor network (McQuire, 2016) [46].

Third, some scenes present a risk of “shallow symbolization” due to lack of deep contextual support. Except for the Home Appliance Story Museum, many spatial installations tend toward excessive visual consumption, showing a communication logic of “shallow narrative—strong label—weak context,” making it difficult to maintain continuity of historical context. As Adams stated, mediated space that cannot embed deep semantic structures is easily engulfed by “image landscapes” (Adams, 2009) [47].

4.3.3 New Urban Cultural Landmark In the urban competition pattern dominated by media logic, cultural landmarks are no longer merely symbols of geographic high points or architectural scales but spatial nodes that are viewed, disseminated, and remembered (Adams, 2009) [47]. Hechai 1972 has evolved into a “new landmark” in Hefei’s urban cultural cognition through the co-construction of digital dissemination and visual culture.

First, from the perspective of urban brand construction, Hechai 1972 frequently appears in social media, portal platforms, and official urban propaganda, endowed with the connotation of “new cultural business card.” Its “prison—industrial—cultural and creative” composite identity is organized by media into a narrative chain of “urban memory—creative activation—avant-garde expression,” becoming a symbolic narrative center of local culture.

Second, in terms of media communication attributes, the park’s high visibility in the online image system embeds it into the core structure of the city’s “dominant visual regimes/layers” (McQuire, 2016) [48]. As McQuire pointed out, the generation of urban media landmarks depends on the joint action of image superposition, spatial performance, and social coding (McQuire, 2008) [49]. Its differentiated scene of “industrial heritage + jailbreak symbols” strengthens the space’s unique recognizability, constituting a “new label” in Hefei’s cultural space.

In summary, Hechai 1972’s evolution path demonstrates the leap logic from “marginal industrial space” to “cultural center node.” On one hand, it maintains the emotional structure and “sense of place” of historical scenes; on the other hand, it implants cultural added value through mediated frameworks, presenting media landmark attributes that integrate “spatial memory—cultural dissemination—local identity.”

4.4 Research Conclusions

This paper systematically analyzes the spatial transformation logic, cultural scene construction, and dissemination pathways of industrial heritage in its cultural tourism transformation, using Hechai 1972 Creative Park as a case and integrating spatial production theory, cultural scene theory, and media geography theory. Spatial production drives heritage transformation and dominates the logic; old and new pluralistic scenes construct new urban cultural tensions; digital communication fosters mediated reproduction of space. Each

stage presents a mutually supportive, overall progressive, spiral development path.

(1) Spatial Production Drives Heritage Transformation and Dominates Logic

At the spatial production dimension, Hechai's transformation is jointly driven by three mechanisms: industrial policy, land capital, and urban renewal, achieving the leap from "closed industrial production" to "open cultural composite space." The introduction of public functions, spatial openness, and participation of multiple social forces not only reconstructs urban publicness but also reflects the practical orientation of spatial justice, responding to Lefebvre's theory of "social production of space" and Harvey's theory of "capital spatial fix" (Lefebvre, 1991) [5] (Harvey, 2006) [50].

(2) Old and New Pluralistic Scenes Construct New Urban Cultural Tensions

Cultural scene reconstruction, based on multi-level "cultural amenity" configurations such as exhibitions, leisure, and retro aesthetics, significantly enhances cultural attraction and participatory experience (Clark et al., 2002) [51]. Spatial scenes perform excellently in dimensions such as nostalgia, entertainment, and innovation atmosphere, but simultaneously face issues of insufficient local expression and singular industrial memory narrative, reflecting the tension between scene consumption and historical authenticity. This phenomenon confirms Zukin's critique of "commodification of urban cultural space" and suggests that cultural tourism spaces require deeper cultural embedding strategies (Zukin, 1995) [52].

(3) Digital Communication Fosters Mediated Reproduction of Space

In terms of media pathways, the park reconstructs spatial cognition through social media, digital platforms, and visual symbols, achieving the leap from physical remains to cultural landmark. Media is not only a communication tool but also participates in the reproduction of spatial meaning, presenting a new trend of "media-as-space" (Adams, 2009) [53]. This logic aligns with McQuire's definition of "media city" and responds to McQuire's construction perspective of "dominant visual space layers" in media geography (McQuire, 2008) [54].

(4) Transformation Path Model of Industrial Heritage Cultural Tourism

Through research on Hechai 1972's transformation process, a clear transformation path model for industrial heritage cultural tourism can be derived (Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]): (1) Spatial attribute transformation is the driving force and prerequisite for spatial reproduction, providing the foundation for cultural scene and media dissemination intervention; (2) Spatial production connects "material spatial attributes" with "human social practice," representing the core of transformation from static space to dynamic social scenes; (3) Pluralistic scene construction serves as the transformation mechanism between "space and culture" and the intermediary platform for entering media dissemination; (4) After space acquires mediated attributes, it

becomes not only a geographic entity but also a “cultural scene” and “urban cultural transmitter.”

Figure 2: Transformation Path Model of Industrial Heritage Cultural Tourism (Author’s Creation)

Research reveals that its transformation path presents a four-stage spiral development process of “spatial attribute transformation—spatial production—scene construction—spatial mediation,” reflecting a coupling mechanism of multiple types of spatial production that progress from spatial regeneration to cultural value enhancement and symbolic dissemination. In summary, the cultural tourism transformation of industrial heritage is not only a process of spatial morphological renewal but also an interactive coordination of three logics: cultural cognition, emotional participation, and media dissemination. This study provides an operational and theoretical reference for understanding the urban cultural tourism transformation of industrial heritage in China.

5. Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

(1) Proposing a Four-Stage Transformation Model for Industrial Heritage Cultural Tourism

This study constructs a four-stage transformation path of “spatial attribute drive—spatial production—scene construction—mediated reproduction,” systematically revealing the internal logic of transformation from “industrial—rule of law” composite heritage from productive space to cultural tourism experience site, enriching systematic research on transformation mechanisms in traditional industrial heritage studies.

(2) Achieving Integration of Spatial Production, Cultural Scene, and Media Geography Theories

Integrating neo-Marxist urban school (Harvey, 2006) [50], spatial production theory (Lefebvre, 1991) [5], cultural scene theory (Clark, 2010) [6], and media geography theory (Adams, 2009) [7] (McQuire, 2008) [4] breaks through disciplinary bottlenecks in heritage tourism research, forming a multi-dimensional, progressive analytical framework that enriches theoretical research pathways for cultural tourism space.

(3) Application of Cultural Scene Theory in Chinese Heritage Context

Based on Clark’s cultural scene dimensions (Clark, 2010) [6] and combined with a triple system of “scene amenities—spatial dimensions—media characteristics,” this study optimizes a scene evaluation model applicable to China’s industrial heritage renovation practice, advancing the localization transformation and empirical application of cultural scene theory.

(4) Deepening Heritage Mediation Research Perspective

Emphasizing the key role of media platforms, user-generated content (UGC),

and spatial visual symbols in shaping cultural identity and new urban culture construction, this study responds to the theoretical proposition of “media-as-space” (Adams, 2009) [55], compensating for the insufficient research on spatial mediated production in China’s current industrial heritage tourism.

5.2.1 Limitations of Hechai 1972 Practice

(1) Significant Spatial Transformation Effect, Strong Identity Narrative Tension

Hechai 1972 successfully achieved the transformation from “industrial—prison composite space” to “cultural and creative—consumption cultural venue,” constructing visually impactful cultural tourism symbols through prison architectural texture and industrial facility remains, endowing urban heritage space with “destruction—construction” tension and significantly enhancing its spatial recognizability and dissemination. However, this space mainly focuses on superficial functions such as “check-in—consumption—performance,” still failing to fully mobilize its deep institutional culture and historical education potential, with weak knowledge attributes and public functions of space.

(2) Cultural Scene Construction Has Breadth but Lacks Deep Cultural Connotation

Empirical analysis shows that although the park is highly diverse in amenity dimensions, covering multiple Clark-style scene dimensions such as art exhibition halls, retro markets, cultural and creative markets, and coffee leisure spaces, it still insufficiently shapes emotional resonance for “locality” and “memory.” The translation of original prison space mostly remains at the formal transformation level, lacking continuity of cultural narrative; the participation of Hefei local intangible cultural heritage, industrial labor history, and community memory is relatively low, resulting in a trend of “regional dilution” in cultural scenes.

(3) Unsound Social Participation Mechanism, Relatively Singular Spatial Governance Subject

Park management remains dominated by government or state-owned enterprises, lacking institutionalized absorption of diverse subjects such as citizen communities, art organizations, and individual residents. Public curation, topic participation, and community interaction are relatively scarce, unable to form a truly shared cultural governance pattern. This “single dominance—user consumption” structure easily falls into path dependency of “cultural productization” rather than “cultural co-construction.”

5.2.2 Policy Recommendations

(1) Promote “Dual Narrative” to Deepen Historical Education Function

Learning from experiences such as Australia’s Fremantle Old Prison (UDLA, 2022) [56] and Spain’s Lugo Prison (RevistaneStrahistoria.com, 2019) [57], Hechai should construct a composite narrative around two main lines of

“industrial labor history” and “rule of law system history,” promoting spatial exhibition from visual representation to knowledge education. Introducing methods such as “scene drama + interactive tours + documentary archives” to construct memory-type public spaces, strengthening the era responsibility and collective reflection of historical spaces.

(2) Activate “Local Culture” Resources, Strengthen Cultural Embeddedness

Guiding intangible cultural heritage inheritors, folk craftsmen, and community cultural groups to deeply participate in spatial reconstruction, learning from Taipei’s “Treasure Hill” art community experience, promoting “art intervention—heritage reconstruction” practice to form cultural scenes with regional, emotional, and participatory characteristics, promoting the activation and reproduction of local culture (Lia, 2022) [58].

(3) Construct Co-governance Mechanisms with Pluralistic Subject Participation

Learning from the operation model of Berlin’s Tacheles Art Factory, introducing open spatial governance mechanisms such as “topic curation,” “community council,” and “youth residency program,” strengthening collaborative participation of young artists, university teachers and students, and local residents, constructing an urban cultural governance pattern centered on “co-construction—co-management—shared benefits” (Sandig, 2021) [59].

5.3 Research Limitations and Future Directions

This study focuses on the spatial transformation mechanisms and cultural scene reconstruction logic of industrial heritage cultural tourism. Although it constructs a systematic theoretical analysis framework, it still needs deepening in dynamic media communication mechanisms, multi-subject collaborative construction paths, and long-term local culture embedding mechanisms. Future research could further introduce methods such as social surveys and participatory observation to enhance supplementary understanding from micro-subject perspectives of cultural reproduction processes, providing more contextual theoretical support for urban heritage governance and cultural activation practice.

Meanwhile, it is recommended to further explore the role and value of media technologies such as augmented reality and virtual reality in heritage dissemination, combined with multi-case comparisons, to enhance the model’s broad applicability and predictive capability.

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