ISVS e-journal
Journal of the International Society for the Study of Vernacular Settlements
2025

Final Review Report ISVSej_12.06.12_Anshika
Compiled from Two Reviews

Please use this number to identify the revision.

Title of paper: Decoding Sacred Landscapes: The Interplay of Spirituality and Vernacular Built Forms in Riverine Settlements

General

This paper examines the issue of the contemporary urban design often neglecting the relationships, treating riverfronts as aesthetic or commercial opportunities rather than cultural ecologies. However, it has some issues that need to be resolved.

Title: The title is reasonably well composed. However, some improvements are needed. Following title is suggested: **Decoding Sacred Landscapes: The Interplay of Spirituality and Vernacular Built Forms in Riverine Settlements in India**

Justification: The title is well composed but it does not say where on earth are these vernacular settlements. Therefore, it should add 'India.'

Language: Language is reasonably good. However, there are some issues in terms of grammar and use of phrases. For example, the introduction suddenly becomes 'personal' with the use of the terms such as 'our' and 'we.' It is better to avoid using first person in research, unless it employs first-person phenomenological research. This does not. Moreover, statements such as "(Sultana & Muhammad 2018) emphasized" are wrong. When the authors are the subject of a sentence, they cannot be placed within brackets. It must be written as "Sultana & Muhammad (2018) have emphasized." Moreover, when referring to previous research, use the past participle and not the past tense.

Formatting: This paper has some issues in formatting. Abstract needs to be indented on both sides more as per the template. There must be space left between sub titles and the paragraphs above, although there should be no space between paragraphs. Sub titles must have all the first letters capital. Lists must be bulleted or numbered and indented from the left. Tables must be Ariel Narrow font 10 points. Fig. Titles must mention Fig. XX: not Fig X: The dot is missing. Please use the template: it has a header and a footer and instructions for formatting. Follow the template to the last dot.

Abstract

Abstract is written well. The issue is introduced brief and it says what the paper examines. The second paragraph presents the research methods and the third paragraph presents the conclusions. This abstract explains clearly what the methods employed are and what the conclusions arrived at, are. Well done.

Key words: Not well identified. This paper deals with sustainability of traditional practices in Andra Pradesh. With these keywords, any one searching for studies on Andra Pradesh will not find this paper. It is not clear how the phrase circular economy comes there. This is misleading and is not proper.

Paper

1. **The introduction:**
   Introduction is not written well. It is written in the form of an essay. It introduces the issue of sustainability practices in the vernacular settlements in Andra Pradesh. However, it then immediately goes on to introducing the case study. An introduction must introduce the issue as related to the title, and as claimed in the abstract. It must then say what this research examines followed by the aims and objectives. This means that after the first paragraph, it must say what it examines and declare the aims and objectives and stop.

Editor-in-Chief
Dr. Ranjith Dayaratne,
e-mail: editor@isvshome.com

An introduction, after introducing the issue, must briefly say what is examined and what the aims and objectives are. Aims first and the objectives afterwards. Please note that aims are noble, unmeasurable, long term, almost-impossible-to-fully-achieve expectations while objectives are practical, measurable, short term, achievable intentions. Objectives must be always listed starting with 'To'. The introduction must end with the aims and objectives.

This introduction ends by saying that "This region is renowned for its diverse landscapes, including coastal plains, river valleys, and hill ranges, which have influenced its socio-cultural practices and resource management strategies." So, what is the issue? What exactly does this research examine and what are the aims and objectives. Please state these after the first paragraph. Currently, the aim is mentioned under research methods. It says "The research aimed to provide tangible benefits." This is not proper. This is not a meaningful aim any way. Too general.

Remove the introduction to Andra Pradesh from the introduction and place it after the research methods, where it should declare that the study employs case study as a method. This is too early to introduce the case study.

2. **Theoretical Framework**: This paper currently has no theoretical framework for the study, although it examines specific issues, involving specific concepts such as 'traditions,' and 'sustainability' etc. Therefore, it should offer a discussion about these ideas theoretically since it refers to them. The theoretical framework should start with the definitions and must be produced employing the voice of the authors with statements such as 'according to Rapoport (1969),' or 'Lawarence (2000) argues,' instead of the authors making statements and putting references within brackets. The authors of this paper cannot theorize because they are not theoreticians. Please produce a meaningful theoretical framework by referring to the most outstanding theoreticians. Define the terms first.

3. **Review of Literature**: There is a review of literature, but it is not done well. A review of literature should discuss the major research that has examined the issue previously to show the status of current knowledge, and where the gaps of that knowledge exist. The issue here is 'sustainability of traditional practices in vernacular settlements.' The review should critically examine previous research that have examined the issue globally first, and refer to research that have examined the same in India afterwards.' If none exists, say so.

   A review of literature must be produced employing the voice of the authors with statements such as 'according to Oliver (1999),' or 'Rapoport (2000) points out,' instead of the authors making statements and putting references within brackets. It should be a 'critical review'. This review makes statements and puts authors within brackets.

   Please see 'how to write a review of literature' in the ISVS e-journal web site and follow suit. Write in the present tense because it discusses current knowledge. Sum up at the end and show what the status of current knowledge is and where the gaps of that knowledge exist. 12-15 references are needed.

   Currently, a reasonably discussion exists but after the opening paragraph which provides the context of research, the authors must not make statements except to comment on the research being discussed. The statement in the second paragraph about Nature and sustainability does not belong here. Please discuss who has found what through previous research and demonstrate what has not been studied. Strengthen this by presenting the global research first and those in India afterwards. Phrases such as "(Jinan 2017) Research" are wrong. It should be written as "Jinan (2017) has highlighted." There is no need to mention research, book etc. or 'in their study.' They are obvious.

   Moreover, Nature must always start with a capital 'N' when referring to mother Nature. Do not use the word 'Humans' to refer to people. It sounds like that the authors are from another planet.

4. **Research Methodology**: This is reasonably well done, although the sub title is wrong. Social sciences do not use "materials and methods." Do not just imitate sub titles used in physical science in social sciences. Moreover, there is a confusion. It says that the research employs "a design process to investigate." This is possible only in design research. If it employs design research. If that is the case, then this must be clearly stated at the beginning that there are two Methodologies: Social science and design research. Again, it says "we engaged." Please avoid first person.
   In any case, the presentation of the research methods is problematic. Although this research employs case study as a method, it does not say so anywhere (although at the beginning in the introduction it said so in the wrong place). Instead, here, it says "selected villages." In research papers, use research language. Treat this as a research paper.

   Data gathering techniques are fused in current writing with techniques and what is found. It seems that essentially, there are a number of techniques of gathering data employed: field surveys and observations; structured and semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participatory observations. Some of them are carried out within the case studies and some not. For example, the Focus group discussion is not within the case studies.

Observations and interviews are within the case studies. These techniques of data collection must be made clear: list them first instead of writing descriptions and each must be explained. Current details are reasonable but mixed up. Say what was employed: then the data gathering techniques. Field Surveys and Observations of Case studies. (Use present tense nevertheless) List them first and explain how each was carried out, with full details of where, when and how.

How the interviews were administered and how the respondents were chosen must be also divulged. Say how many responded. They must be explained in such a way that another independent researcher can repeat them and see if they will get the same results. That is the test of science.

Current writing is confusing because it talks only of 'what the methods were employed for.' Moreover, analytical methods are not mentioned for many except for Lifecycle Assessment. Be consistent.

5. **Case study**: Before the findings, introduce the case studies: First, Andra Pradesh. Please bring the discussion that existed after the introduction until the review of literature here. Show the selected residential buildings and justify the selection of these villages. Please provide a location plan identifying each village while providing a general description to the case study areas. Please confine the introduction to the basic information about the case study areas and stop. Produce images of the buildings and details of plans and sections, if any specific building was 'observed and recorded.'

6. **Findings:** There is no separate section identified as 'Findings' but 'Discussion.' This is not acceptable at all. Moreover, the findings are not presented at all. Reproduce a short introduction to the issue first and then present the data. Please produce data from all the techniques mentioned as related to each of the data gathering techniques: Field surveys, observations, interviews, etc. Findings from the case studies or whatever technique employed to collect data must be presented as part of the outcome of the first part that employed social science research methods to uncover the sustainable practices. At the end of that, all the sustainable practices must be divulged and listed. It is only afterwards, that the second part of the research which is the design research should be presented.

   Statements such as "we have identified key sustainable practices and products" and "Field surveys and observations reveal that these traditional practices are inherently sustainable" have no scientific value. They cannot be accepted without all the evidence. Everything written under 'discussion' is meaningless.

   Design Research: Instead of the sub title "discussion' please say 'design research. Prior to that and at the end of the analysis of the social science research, list all the traditional practices discovered, such as Used Newspaper and Jute Rope for Packing Groceries, repurposed paper and plastic mixed sheets used for book covers, Butta, Tatta, and Jalla, traditional multipurpose baskets. However, this list cannot be only these three.

   Afterwards, explain the design research activity, which involves making things employing these traditional practices. Present the outcomes and how they have been evaluated as being sustainable by the Peer Review.

7. **Discussion:** There is no discussion that discusses the findings of this research. In fact, this should have a section discussing the findings with other research that have examined the same issue if any exist. Such a discussion should show if the findings of this research are similar or different to other research. If different, then it should explain why. Moreover, discuss only what the data and findings mean and what their implications are, and not what the authors think: no personal opinions please. If none exist say so.

8. **Conclusions**: The conclusions are poor. In fact, there are no conclusions derived from this research. What is written is a very short 'concluding remarks.' There must be specific conclusions and they must be related to two aspects: (1) Sustainable Traditional Materials and (2) sustainable traditional Practices. Please list them under these sub headings and explain as found through research. After all, the abstract said that "The study concludes that integrating traditional knowledge with modern design approaches can enhance resilience, promote local economies, and foster environmentally responsible development in rural settings." The introduction said that this study will reveal "how indigenous materials, products, processes, and systems contribute to sustainability." Conclusions must be these.

Please also revisit the aims and objectives of the paper. The purpose of this study was to ascertain how indigenous materials, products, processes, and systems contribute to sustainability. Conclusions must relate to these. Please list these aspects separately as revealed in this research as related to this particular place: Andhra Pradesh in India. Please discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this research after the conclusions.

R**eferences:** Most references are done wrong in the text. List of references are incomplete. Please check.

Final Decision: Major Revisions

Summary of the overall observations of the paper:

This is a potentially very valuable paper that could make a significant contribution to knowledge about the Traditional Sustainable Materials and Practices in vernacular settlements. It closely examines them in Rural Andhra Pradesh in India. However, it needs major revisions to bring the argument to be cohesive, supported by clear findings.

The abstract needs to be succinct but must have sufficient details to introduce the issue, the research methods and the specific conclusions. It is written reasonably well; research methods need clearer explanations and the conclusions must also be clearer.

The introduction needs to be presented articulating the issue succinctly. It should not dwell upon the case study here. Be clear what the research focuses on and say it. It should end with proper focused aims and objectives in keeping with the issue.

Please produce a good theoretical framework defining what is 'traditional,' 'vernacular,' 'materials and practices', as well as 'culture' and other theoretical notions relevant to the issue. Write a proper review of literature afterwards.

The research methodology requires to be organized well with a list of the techniques employed to gather data and explanations of how each was carried out: Mention the use of case study as a method in the first part and then mention the design research. Introduce the case study only afterwards: provide details about how the research was carried out: two separately.

Have a sub title: Findings. Present the findings to be meaningful and to show the data generated from all the techniques: Focus on the traditional materials and practices in India. That is what this research is claimed to be about.

Discuss only the specific conclusions arising from the findings related to the case study. No general comments about the issue. Treat this as a research paper and not an essay. Conclusions must have evidence. They are not supposed to be personal opinions of the authors or just concluding remarks. In other words, the conclusions must be derived and substantiated by the data and be specific to the case study in Andra Pradesh in India. However, please note that case study findings cannot be generalized.

At the end, discuss the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of this research. Re-examine and reproduce the references to be compatible with the ISVS e-journal template. Use the template for the entire paper with attention to details.

Editor-in-Chief
Dr. Ranjith Dayaratne,
e-mail: editor@isvshome.com