

Review Report ISVSej_12.02.03_Amanjeet
Compiled from Two Reviews

Please use this number to identify the revision.

Title of paper: Space and Culture: Understanding Architectural Shifts in Assamese Indigenous Homes

General

This paper examines an issue related to the transformations of architecture in the indigenous houses in Assam, India. The paper is reasonably well written. However, it has some issues that need to be resolved.

Title: Title is not well composed. The term 'homes' is inappropriate, and it must be houses. The word 'understanding' is obvious and does not need to be mentioned in a title. Following title is suggested: **Relations between Space and Culture in Vernacular Settlements: Transformations of Architecture in the Indigenous Houses in Assam, India.**

Language: Language is reasonably good. However, the line of argument is not built up well; Write short and meaningful sentences, using appropriate connectors. More critically, there are some issues with regard to the system of citations. When the authors are the subject of a sentence, their names should not be within brackets. For example, '(Rosaleeny Gamón, 2020) argues' is wrong. There are also uses like (Banks, 2008) (Lin and Jackson, 2019). All should be within two brackets.

Formatting: This paper has some issues of formatting. The template used is not the right one. Sub titles should be 12 points always. There should be no spaces between the sub title and the paragraph below. However, there should be a space between a paragraph and a figure below as well as the source and the paragraph below it always. However, there should be no spaces between paragraphs. First line of every paragraph must be indented from the left. Line spaces must be always single. Moreover, bulleted or numbered text must be left-justified.

References are not formatted properly. There should be no spaces between the references. Some references are incomplete. Without place of publication and publisher. Page numbers should be without p. or pp. Be consistent

Please use the ISVS e-journal template to the last dot.

Abstract

Abstract is reasonably well-written. However, the contents have some issues. First paragraph must introduce the issue of Asamese vernacular architecture that have undergone changes because of socio-cultural factors. Do not use abbreviations such as XOR in abstracts and also anywhere else without the full meaning. Introduction to the issue is inadequate here. It must say what is examined and not aims. Second paragraph must be about the research methods and the third paragraph must be about the conclusions.

Currently, research methods are not explained well. This research employs space syntax as a method of analysis, not gathering data. It employs a literature survey, case studies, observations and interviews to gather data.. Within the case studies, data has been gathered using observations and interviews for primary data collection. It is how the method should be written about in the abstract. Please explain how data was gathered about the case studies briefly. Conclusions are reasonable but not written as conclusions. Please mention the specific conclusions related to this issue briefly here. Please note that an abstract is written at the end of doing a research and even after writing the full paper. It is not a proposal to declare the aims. Write short sentences and be brief. An abstract must be succinct.

Paper

- The introduction:** Introduction is written well, in terms of introducing the issue, but it has issues. It should introduce the broader issue of the transformations of architecture and the abandonment of traditions. It rightly argues that the solution is not to return to traditional dwellings which has serious drawbacks. However, it suddenly ends. An introduction must introduce the issue, say what it investigates and then end with the aims and objectives. This does not do so.

It should end the introduction before talking about socio-culture & sustainability. That belongs to theory. 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 them.

2. **Theoretical Framework:** This paper must present a theoretical discussion about 'culture and space', 'vernacular and traditions' and other theoretical notions explored in this paper. It must refer to the most outstanding theoreticians who have articulated these ideas. As a paper that deals with culture and space, references to Rapoport (1969) and Oliver (1987 etc) are missing. A theoretical framework must be produced employing the voice of the authors with statements such as 'according to Godman (1999), or Lawrence (2000) argues, instead of the author making statements and putting references within brackets. The author of this paper cannot theorize because she/he is not a theoretician. Currently, what is written under this sub title is not a theoretical framework. It is a discussion about the Asamese culture. It talks about 'socio-religious functions', 'culinary Traditions', and 'vernacular architecture of Assam'. This is not theory. This is an introduction to culture and space in Assam.

There is a serious issue in this writing.

There is not a single reference to where this information came from. The authors cannot know them by themselves, and surely have taken the material from other sources. Please acknowledge the sources.

Please produce a proper theoretical framework by referring to theoreticians. Define first, the terms employed and theoretically discuss the relations among them as articulated by the theoreticians.

What is written under this sub title could indeed be part of the Findings, because they are about Asamese culture. It can be the background to the study of the transformations, and therefore should be placed as finding or just before the findings after research methodology.

3. **Review of Literature:** What is written as the review of literature is a 'theoretical framework' which defines culture and Socio-Culture. This is inadequate even as a theoretical framework. In any case, it must be re-titled. A review of literature should discuss the major research that have examined the issue previously, to show the status of current knowledge and where the gaps of knowledge exists. The issue here is 'Transformations of architecture in vernacular settlements and the relations between space and culture'.
- A review of literature must be produced employing the voice of the authors with statements such as 'according to Oliver (1999), or Rapoport (1969) points out, instead of the authors making statements and putting references within brackets. It should be a 'critical review'. 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 is the status of current knowledge and where the gaps of that knowledge exist. 12-15 references are needed. Currently, none exists. Instead, under this sub title, there is a discussion of culture and socio-culture. This is theory and not a critical review of previous research that have examined this issue. what is written should be part of the 'theoretical framework' at the beginning, sub titled as 'theoretical framework'.
4. **Research Methodology:** This is not done well. The research employs a case study method. Case studies are a qualitative method, and this must be mentioned first after which, all the data gathering techniques employed must be listed and explained in detail. Say what was employed (Case studies) (Use present tense nevertheless) then the data gathering techniques. List them first and explain how each was carried out, with full details. It seems to employ the following and has issues as shown. Shockingly, it was later discovered that this was a single case study. This must be mentioned here.
- **Literature or document survey:** it mentions a 'review of literature' which is a method to find out the status of current knowledge and not a data gathering technique for case studies.
 - **Observations:** It refers to 'observational techniques'; this makes no sense. Say what you did during the site visits.
 - **Physical surveys and unstructured interviews:** Interviews with whom, when where and how. It only says, Respondents included house residents and closely associated neighbors. How many?

Inductive analysis, and qualitative analysis using the Justified Plan Graph (JPG) from Space Syntax theory are methods of analysis. They are not research methods of gathering data.

Please divide this section to two. Data gathering techniques and methods of analysis. They must be explained before the 'Findings' 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 chaotic and is not clear. Do not talk about what data was gathered but how.

5. **Case study:** Before the findings, introduce the case study and where the observations were conducted. Show the locations where research was conducted. Provide a location plan and a general descriptions to the case study. This is written under 'study area'; 'purchased homes' is a wrong statement . Homes cannot be bought or sold, Say houses. **Shockingly, the fact that this was only a single case study is revealed here.** Please introduce this separately after the general description of the area, with a location plan and a plan of the house.
6. **Findings:** Findings are reasonably well presented, but the sub title is missing. Please introduce a sub title 'Findings' before the Table 1 and give an introduction. Identify the House with a number, road, or whatever. Someone should be able to visit this house and see if what you are writing and found out is true. Moreover, produce the data first and analysis of data afterwards. Explain what the observations of the case study is, before explaining. More critically, cite the sources of information. Currently, it is written as an essay describing as if the author knows everything. For example, the table 1 says the source is author, which cannot be. How did he/they know the first generation had 10 with 8 children, 5 male & 3 Females. Acknowledge the source of this information.

There is no data from many of the techniques of gathering data. For example, where are the observations, where are the interview data? No data. No sources acknowledged. This is not acceptable.

Fig 3 text is unreadable.

Therefore currently, findings are not presented very well. Some information have no method of finding them. Statements such as 'will help in understanding' cannot be accepted in the findings.

Analysis of data must not comment on if the findings are in line with the findings of the other researchers. This belongs to discussion. 'reveals several key findings that align with, extend, and in some cases challenge existing literature on vernacular architecture' does not belong under 'Data Analysis and the Findings'.

Tables 3, 4 & 5 has Letters which are difficult to know what they mean. C4-2, C3-3 etc. Please present them clearer.

More critically, despite the fact that this research claimed to establish the relations between 'culture and space', these graphs do not show any thing about culture. Culture is absent in these findings. This is a serious issue and is at the heart of this research. The question really is 'can space syntax' reveal culture?

Discussion: Please discuss the findings of this research with other research that have examined the same issue if any. Discuss what the findings mean and what their implications are.

However, the key findings are well done.

7. **Conclusions:** Poor. List the specific conclusions referring to the key findings. Currently, it says what the paper did, instead of presenting the conclusions. Please note that 'concluding remarks for an essay' is not acceptable in research. Please discuss the strengths and weaknesses after the conclusions separately.

'makes a methodological contribution' is not a conclusion about the relations between culture and space in in the indigenous houses in Assam

'expands the limited corpus of spatial studies' is not a conclusion about the relations between culture and space in the indigenous houses in Assam

'provides a novel approach' is not a conclusion about the relations between culture and space in the indigenous houses in Assam.

The issue was the 'relations between space and culture in vernacular settlements as revealed through the transformations of architecture in the Indigenous houses in Assam, India'. Conclusions must relate to this issue, although findings from a single case study are not generalizable in any sense. Making general statements is not acceptable as conclusions.

8. **References:** References are poorly done. Some of the page numbers are missing, some use p. and some pp. some nothing. Books do not require page numbers. Pay attention to details and be consistent. Use Harvard system as per the template. Follow the template to the last dot. Left justify the list, and remove the spaces between each reference.

Final Decision: Major Revisions

Summary of the overall observations of the paper:

This is a very valuable paper that could potentially make a significant contribution to knowledge about the relations between space and culture in vernacular settlements as revealed through the transformations of architecture in the indigenous houses in Assam, India. However, it needs major revisions to bring the knowledge to be meaningful and cohesive supported by clear findings.

Abstract needs to be refined. Introduction needs to be presented in the proper order. It must end with proper aims and objectives. Introduce a proper theoretical framework, and write a proper review of literature. The research methodology requires to be organized well with a list of techniques employed to gather data and explanations of how each was carried out with precise details so that the research can be reproduced. Re-organise the findings to be meaningful and to show the main finding of how the transformations have taken place in the case study. Detailed floor plans are needed for each transformation of the phases with clearer annotations. This is the main finding and it is all in one page and difficult to see and understand.

Write the conclusion with only the specific conclusions arising from the findings related to the case study as related to culture and space. Do not make general statements about things what the paper did. This should not be 'concluding remarks' but 'conclusions derived and substantiated by data'.

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/standards.