

Final Review Report ISVSej_12.03.02_Esha
Compiled from Two Reviews

Please use this number to identify the revision.

Title of paper: Vernacular Agricultural Practices and their Impact and Dependency on Riverine Landscapes: Insights from Mali Community, India

General

This paper examines an issue related to the ways in which vernacular agricultural practices have an impact and dependency on the riverine landscapes. The paper is not well written. It has major issues that need to be resolved.

Title: The title is reasonably well composed. However, some improvements are needed. Following title is suggested: Vernacular Agricultural Practices and their Impact and Dependency on Riverine Landscapes: Insights from the Mali Community in India.

Language: Language is reasonably good. However, there are some issues of language in terms of grammar. Definite and indefinite articles are not properly used. Write short and meaningful sentences and construct a narrative, which is not happening well now. It is also necessary to construct a good flow of the argument. Do not refer to people as 'humans' as if you come from another planet. Some references are wrong. For example, (Open Book Publishers CIC Ltd. et al., 2013) is completely wrong. Publisher cannot be cited, but the author. The term et al. cannot be used for publishers. Follow the conventions.

Formatting: This paper has no significant issues in formatting. However, there should be no spaces between the sub title and the text below.

Abstract

Abstract is not well-written. Language issues exist. There are some issues related to the contents. First paragraph must introduce the issue of the co-existence of the traditional beliefs, systems, knowledge, and practices of the vernacular communities and the natural cycle of livelihood processes of them. It claims that this paper documents this coexistence. However, an abstract must not talk about the aims, but say what it investigates at the end of the first paragraph after introducing what the issue is (not in the middle of it, or at the beginning).

Second paragraph must be about the research methods and the third paragraph must be about the conclusions.

Current second paragraph does not explain the research methods well. This research employs case study as a method within which a site survey and documentations have been carried out as data gathering techniques. Don't say what the method does, but how the method was used to gather data. Please explain how data was gathered and not what the data was. Moreover, the second paragraph has only two sentences: one sentence is 9 lines long, which is wrong. Write short and meaningful sentences. Just mentioning a series of methods is not what is needed. It is not necessary to say what the data does but how the data was collected. This description is not clear.

Last paragraph makes no sense. It says that "The methodology adopted concludes the recording of landscape patterns along the river". (this is not even true: read the conclusion) A methodology cannot conclude. A methodology is employed to gather data. The statement that it "concludes the recording of landscape patterns along the river" makes no sense whatsoever. Recording of landscape patterns along the river cannot be a conclusion. Write short and meaningful sentences. Use words carefully.

Moreover, the abstract should be confined to the first page. An abstract should be succinct although it should be comprised of three paragraphs: introduction to the issue with a statement of exactly what is being investigated, methods of data collection, and the specific conclusions derived. This abstract does not do it well.

Key words: Not well identified. This paper deals with riverine landscapes as a focus. Keywords are mentioned to help another researcher to locate a research paper if it relates to an issue that person is looking at. With these keywords, someone looking at research related to riverine landscapes will not locate this paper. That is not proper.

Paper

1. **The introduction:** Introduction is written poor. It introduces the issue reasonably well; it says that “much of the riverine landscapes and traditions survive in oral traditions, with only limited, incomplete written records”. It continues to say “many indigenous practices and techniques remain largely unexplored”. This is fine. However, afterwards, it keeps on writing about these settings, illustrating what others have said about them, which makes no sense.

However, this issue is different from what the title says. It says that “Vernacular agricultural practices have an impact and a dependency on riverine landscapes. The abstract says that the “traditional beliefs, systems, knowledge, and practices of the vernacular communities help them maintain the natural cycle of livelihood processes without altering Nature and that. This paper documents this coexistence”. These are different things. In the introduction, there is no reference to vernacular agricultural practices except that it says that “they support a range of important human and ecological values and are utilized for various purposes such as agriculture”. This is different from what the title says. Please be consistent.

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.

In this paper, there is lack of coherence and a lack of clarity. Thus, it is not clear what this research is about. The introduction ends by saying that “Water and how people manage water landscapes are essential parts of the cultural and social identity of the community discussed in the study”. That is another thing: cultural and social identity of the community.

The aim of this paper is not clear; it talks about different things at different times. This is not proper. After introducing the issue, briefly say what is examined and what the aims and objectives are. Aims first and the objectives afterwards. Please focus on one issue and not everything: agricultural practices, identity, coexistence between the natural cycle of livelihood processes and Nature. They have not been tied together in the introduction.

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 suddenly abandons the narrative. It ends abruptly and the narrative is broken.

2. **Theoretical Framework:** This paper has a good collection of material related to the theoretical framework for the study. Since it examines specific issues, it should offer a discussion about ‘rivers’, ‘landscapes’, ‘traditions’, ‘culture’ ‘indigenous knowledge’ etc. and their interrelationships. However, its entry into the discussion is abrupt and blunt. It should start with the definitions of “non-perennial rivers and riverine landscapes”, which it does not do. It also discusses some of the theoretical notions explored in this paper although not well organized and presented. That is because, it talks about the focus of the paper by saying ‘The study focuses on the Mali community residing on River Banas, in Palanpur city of Gujarat, in the months of experiencing the dry phase, observing the streams flowing along the river. These references appear here and there breaking the flow of the discussion. They are not part of the theoretical framework. It also talks about the aims which is wrong. Theoretical framework is the wrong place to discuss them. It ends abruptly too.

Moreover, 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 authors making statements and putting references within brackets. The authors of this paper cannot theorize because they are not theoreticians. Please re-organize and produce a proper theoretical framework by referring to the most outstanding theoreticians. Define the terms first.

3. **Review of Literature:** There is no review of literature at all. 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 that knowledge exist. The issue here is ‘vernacular agricultural practices and their impact and dependency on riverine landscapes’. However, no research is being critically reviewed, although there are some references within the theoretical discussion which should be separated and placed under that title. The review should critically examine previous research that have examined vernacular agricultural practices and their impact and dependency on riverine landscapes globally first, India afterwards and finally deal with any research that exists related to the vernacular settlements in Mali, India (not only or necessarily related to this issue)

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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'.

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, none exists.

4. **Research Methodology:** This is poorly done. There is a confusion here too. The methodology says that "this study showcases the utilization of qualitative methodology". Research methodology should not be 'showcasing methods'. First of all, this study employs case study as a method. within this, a number of data gathering techniques have been employed; Please list them all first and then explain how each technique was implemented. What is written is what data was gathered. That is not the method. Interviews are mentioned. What type of interviews? Who was interviewed? How were the respondents selected? How long did each interview last, when where and how were the data recorded. Those are the details needed. Not what is written.

Site visit is not a method: Observations is a technique employed during site visits to gather data. Say so. How were the observations done, what was observed when, where and for how long? Explain these details. This research does not employ any literature review as a research method, although it claims so. If done, please explain how it was done. List all the literature in a table and say which data was collected from which source.

Currently, everything is mixed up. The techniques of data collection are listed and each is explained. However, the details are wrong and inadequate. What is needed is not theory or what data was gathered but how the techniques was implemented. 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. 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.

Please separate the data gathering techniques and analytical methods. What is written under the sub titles "Empirical work-study", "Site analysis", "Quadrant study", and "Cartographic mapping", do not make much sense. Some of what is said are obvious. Some need clarity. Rewrite.

Keep the explanations about how the data was analyzed separately. Current writing is chaotic, inadequately detailed.

5. **Case studies:** Before the findings, introduce the case study: the Mali community, where the actual research was conducted. Show the locations (houses) where research was conducted and observations carried out. Provide location plans and a general description to the case study (referred to as 'study area'). How many families live here?. This should be an introduction to the settlement, places and the communities: families. This is reasonably well done at the beginning; however, it goes on and on beyond the introduction to the entire paper. This makes no sense. Please confine the introduction to the basic information about the case study and stop. Provide detailed plans of the houses, the agricultural fields and the rivers. This research is claimed to be on "Vernacular agricultural practices and their impact and dependency on riverine landscapes: Insights from the Mali Community, in India". This means that how the dwellings, agriculture and rivers co-exist must be clear.
6. **Findings:** Findings are not well presented. In fact, there is no sub title as 'Findings'. After the research methodology and the introduction to the case study, everything written must be findings. Reproduce a short introduction to the issue and then present the data. Please produce data from all the techniques mentioned as related to each of the data gathering techniques: Observations during site visits, interviews, digital documentation etc. Currently, there is none. This raises the doubt if any of these activities have actually been carried out although they are mentioned for 'showcasing' as claimed.

Begin the findings with the title "observations of the vernacular settlement of the Mali community". First, provide general statistics: No of families, who is engaged in agriculture and who is not. What do they cultivate when, where and how? What is the river and where is it? What is the nature of the Riverine landscape? Things written under the sub-title onwards "Dwellings – Settlement", should be under 'Findings'.

Findings from the interviews are missing. Were they actually conducted? If they were, then why are not the data presented and analysed? List the responses and say what they mean.

Second, provide the documentation from the houses in this place. Show the houses documented in a lay-out plan. How many houses were documented? Documentation was a research method, and this research presented lack of documentation as an issue. In fact, It says “ It focuses on documenting temporal living systems based on the Mali community's livelihood practices and patterns”

There are no houses, living systems or livelihood practices documented. In producing these plans of houses where living happens, the locations of agriculture related activities must be marked. Just producing a view is not enough. Write the names of the spaces inside them and the legend must be about agriculture and other activities.

Stay focused with the research: Vernacular Agricultural Practices and their Impact and Dependency on Riverine Landscapes: Insights from Mali Community, India

In this connection, the most significant findings are around the Figs 7-12. However, the discussion is inadequate. Please produce a table outlining the “Vernacular Agricultural Practices” in one column, impact on the River in another column and Dependency on the riverine landscape in another column.

There is no doubt that there is a lot of good material in this paper. However, the findings are presented chaotic. Most shockingly, there is a reference to a chapter in the middle of it's writing. It says “Tomatoes are one of them; they can be cultivated on site 2 and will be mentioned in detail in Chapter”. This seems like a copy paste from a dissertation. Please make sure that it is not a blind copy paste.

In the findings, if you make a statement, provide evidence. A research paper is not an essay. Research needs data to substantiate the findings.

7. **Discussion:** There is no discussion that discusses the findings of this research with other research that have examined the same issue. However, 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.
8. **Conclusions:** Conclusion is written poor. It begins with an unsubstantiated claim “Mali community's self-taught vernacular sensibility, intricately weaved with their indigenous ways of living, including their language, traditional practices, architecture, relationships, and attitude towards Nature, are all tied through the thread of their indigenous knowledge”. This may be true. However, this research cannot make conclusions about language, relationships or even knowledge because they were not investigated. It cannot even make comments about attitude towards Nature, which were not presented. There is no such a sub title: no data.

Many claims are thus not true: it says ‘their belief that they should not distinguish between Nature and themselves has led to a tight interaction between them and the land they work and live on’. This is not a possible conclusion of this research (although it may be true). This paper did not examine ‘beliefs’. There is no sub title and no data on the beliefs. How were the beliefs uncovered? Which research methodology uncovered the beliefs?

Making statements without evidence is poor science.

Please revisit the title of your paper “Vernacular Agricultural Practices and their Impact and Dependency on Riverine Landscapes: Insights from Mali Community, India”. All your conclusions must relate to this central issue and must be stated as ‘this study concludes...’

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The abstract says “ This paper aims to document this coexistence, demonstrating their Indigenous knowledge and vernacular sensibilities to live around these ecosystems”. Please say what is this ‘knowledge’ (and not beliefs), vernacular sensibilities, and eco-systems are and make the conclusions accordingly. Words have meanings and they cannot be thrown around willy nilly.

Please discuss the strengths and weaknesses after the conclusions

References: References are not done well in text sometimes. For example, (Open Book Publishers CIC Ltd. et al., 2013) is completely wrong. Publisher cannot cited, but the author. et al. cannot be used for publishers. Follow the conventions. In the final list, there are many incomplete references. Books must have places of publications and publishers.

For example,

Weir, J. K. (Ed.). (n.d.) ‘Two Ways’: Bringing Indigenous and Non-Indigenous knowledges together. In Country, Native Title and Ecology. ANU Press. **Has no publisher (Ed) is not needed.** At the end of the title of the book must be a comma and ‘in’ must begin with a simple letter. After which the editors must be mentioned. It is assumed that Weir, J. K. is the author of the article and not the book. Unclear.

What is JAE?. This seems to be a name of a journal in which case, the full title must be mentioned.

Following reference is wrong:

Vidal-Abarca, M. R., Gómez, R., Sánchez-Montoya, M. M., Arce, M. I., Nicolás, N., Suárez, M. L. & **Department of Ecology and Hydrology, Faculty of Biology, Campus of International Excellence “Campus mare Nostrum”, University of Murcia, Campus de Espinardo, 30100 Murcia, Spain.** (2020b) Defining dry rivers as the most extreme type of Non-Perennial fluvial ecosystems. In Sustainability [Journal-article]. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12177202>

What is highlighted in red cannot be added to the list of authors.

What is a “PhD Doctorate”? this is a wrong phrase.

Mistakes are too numerous to mention.

Use the derivative of the Harvard system as per the template. Follow the template to the last dot. Pay attention to details and be consistent.

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 vernacular agricultural practices and their impact and dependency on riverine landscapes. It closely examines the Mali Community in India to offer Insights. 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 not well written; research methods are not described well and the conclusions are problematic. In fact, the paper suffers from a lack of clarity and focus as to what it does. Its title says one thing, abstract says another, the introduction is not clear and the findings do not relate well to the title. Surprisingly, the conclusions only vaguely relate to what it claimed in the title. The order is chaotic, findings are not clear. Conclusions are too general, sometimes saying things about aspects that were not even examined such as language..

Introduction needs to be presented articulating the issue mentioned in the title. It should not dwell upon previous research and peripheral aspects but say what is examined precisely. Is it the impact, co-existence or lack of documentation or what. Be clear. It should end with proper focused aims and objectives in keeping with the issue: one issue, not co-existence, lack of documentation or impact or all of these. Be specific.

Please produce a proper theoretical framework defining what is ‘vernacular knowledge’, ‘agricultural practices’, ‘ecology’ ‘riverine landscapes’, including, culture and other theoretical notions relevant to the issue. Do not talk about the aims of this research within that discussion on the theoretical framework.

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Write a proper review of literature afterwards. 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: not what the data was about. Introduce the case study: the Mali Community.

Re-organize the findings to be meaningful and to show the vernacular agricultural knowledge and practices and their impact and dependency on the riverine landscapes. Demonstrate the nature of the relationship between the vernacular agricultural practices and the riverine landscape. 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 issues such as language, which this paper did not examine. 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. In other words, the conclusions must be derived and substantiated by the data and be specific to the Mali community.

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.