

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND MIGRATION: THE ARCHITECTURE OF IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

This article examines the connection between cultural heritage, migration, and architecture, highlighting how immigrant communities navigate identity and memory through built environments. The study investigates the reflection of the built environment in response to new environmental and social conditions. Through a theoretical analysis of heritage, assimilation, national architecture, and vernacular architecture, the findings aim to contribute to broader discussions on multicultural inclusivity and immigrant architecture's role in shaping national and local identities.

Keywords: migration, cultural heritage, vernacular architecture, national architecture.

Disciplines: Cultural Anthropology, Ethnography

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Absztrakt**KULTURÁLIS ÖRÖKSÉG ÉS MIGRÁCIÓ: AZ IMMIGRÁNS KÖZÖSSÉGEK ÉPÍTÉSZETE**

A tanulmány a kulturális örökség, a migráció és az építészet összefüggéseit vizsgálja, kiemelve, hogy az immigráns közösségek hogyan alakítják identitásukat és emlékezetüket az épített környezeten keresztül. A kutatás azt elemzi, hogy az épített környezet miként reagál az új társadalmi és környezeti feltételekre. Az örökség, az asszimiláció, a nemzeti építészet és a népi építészet elméleti elemzésén keresztül a tanulmány célja hozzájárulni a multikulturális inkluzivitás szélesebb körű diskurzusaihoz, valamint az immigráns építészet nemzeti és helyi identitásformáló szerepének megértéséhez.

Kulcsszavak: migráció, kulturális örökség, népi építészet, nemzeti építészet

Diszciplínák: kulturális antropológia, etnográfia

Cultural landscapes and routes are a cultural heritage that represent human activity and the pathways through which cultural influences move. According to earlier scholars, these spaces are not merely physical locations but are imbued with symbolic meanings, shaping how communities understand their place in history and society. As individuals and groups relocate, they adapt to new environments and engage in cultural transformation, which is reflected in their architectural practices.

This article focuses on the theoretical framework to examine the architecture of immigrants, particularly focusing on Brazilian examples and their architectural paths, as well as contextualizing these experiences within the broader frameworks of memory, assimilation, and cultural heritage. The study of immigration reveals the layered processes through which individuals and groups relocate, adapt, and reshape both themselves and their new environments, blending past and present that is visible in the cultural landscape. Architecture is at the center of this transformation, emerging as a medium of cultural expression, reflecting the building traditions, styles, and materials that immigrants can bring with them and modify to suit new climates, landscapes, and needs. These are tangible elements that provide shelter and encode the identities and memories of immigrant groups,

symbolizing the act of settling down in a new landscape.

The review of such theoretical pillars will help to develop a further reading of the cultural expression in the Hungarian Cultural Route of Jaraguá do Sul, Santa Catarina, Brazil based on the memory narratives. A route that was colonized by Hungarian immigrants who underwent a transformation process, including nationalist-imposed measures. This discussion will cover various dimensions of cultural heritage, from tangible architectural forms to the intangible practices that sustain community identities, revealing many aspects of the human experience that architecture embodies. Through this exploration, the aim is to contribute to understanding how immigrant architecture not only shapes the physical landscape but also enriches the cultural fabric of host societies.

Architecture of the Immigrant: Movement and Settlement

Architecture and migration refer to two opposing meanings (Cairns, 2004). While architecture is related to permanence, to the act of rooting and building, working to develop a place, and delimiting boundaries in spaces, immigration, on the other hand, is related to the movement and transition of people or groups. In this way, it is also

possible to refer to them as settlement and movement, and human life oscillates between these two poles, movement and settlement (Mumford, 1961).

We observe this in history, through nomad behaviors, that their spatial needs are adaptable and temporary structures and often constructed from locally available materials. Such mobility has historically enabled the connection between distant regions, enabling cultural diffusion and exchange. Thus, architecture for nomadic peoples emphasizes adaptability and portability (Mumford, 1961). We have seen the Silk Road as an example, transporting goods and spreading ideas, art, and technologies across continents (Whitfield, 2015). In addition, the human need for movement and settlement is identified in trade cities, where we observe the growth as hubs of mobility, with their spatiality often reflecting this function, providing infrastructure and permanence to support these exchanges, facilitating further cultural diffusion (Mumford, 1961; Lefebvre, 1991). For example, the first capital of Brazil, the city of Salvador, was a major trade hub during the Portuguese colonial period. It was central to the sugarcane and slave trade, connecting Brazil to Africa, Europe, and other parts of the Americas (Freyre, 1933).

The evolving nature of cultural heritage is closely tied to these dynamics of movement and settlement. For example, cultural landscapes combine natural and man-made elements, creating environments that reflect how geography, culture, and identity interact. These landscapes transform as societies modify natural environments, such as transforming forests into agricultural lands, while maintaining symbolic connections to their history and culture. Cultural landscapes are not static environments but living entities that change over time, shaped by the interaction of human activities and natural processes (Fejérdy, 2012; Sonkoly, 2017). Traditional cultural geography approaches - such as those of geographer Carl Ortwin Sauer (1889–1975) and his followers at the Berkeley

School – emphasized material artifacts without establishing relationships between people and places. However, the New Cultural Geography expanded by introducing theories that underscored the symbolic dimensions of landscapes, including identity, perception, and social meaning (Cosgrove & Jackson, 1987). This shift recognizes that cultural landscapes are constantly reshaped by evolving social meanings, values, and power structures. For example, the symbolic interpretations of a village square or a pilgrimage site may change as new generations bring contemporary meanings to it while maintaining links to its cultural origins. For instance, a village square that once served as a market for trade and social interactions may now function as a symbolic link to the ethnic origins of migrant communities.

Likewise, cultural routes exemplify the cultural heritage transmission and transformation through the movement of people, ideas, and goods. These routes, such as the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrimage Route, demonstrate how cultural practices are not fixed to static locations but are enriched and adapted through exchanges between regions and civilizations. Kroeber (1948) and Lévi-Strauss (1966) explored how cultural diffusion occurs, providing a theoretical foundation for interpreting the dynamics of cultural diffusion along such routes, influencing everything from language and religion to art and social structures. Silk Road also illustrates this characteristic of cultural transmission through its cultural route. In addition to facilitating the exchange of goods like silk, spices, and precious metals, this network of trade routes allowed ideas, technologies, and beliefs to flow across Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The Silk Road saw the spread of Buddhism from India to China and beyond, Islamic art and architecture absorbing influences from Central Asia, and paper-making technology spreading from China to the West. In this sense, art, language, and social practices enriched local cultures as a result of

these interactions (Whitfield, 2015). In this way, cultural routes can be understood as means for tangible and intangible heritage, demonstrating how culture is fluid and constantly evolving through interaction.

Thus, memory plays an important role in shaping personal and collective identities, particularly in the context of cultural practices and national narratives (Nora, 1989). Similar to Assmann's (2011) discussion, which focuses on how memory serves as a bridge between personal and collective histories, particularly for migrants. Memory is an active process of negotiation, bringing to light the untold stories (Ricoeur, 2004) of individuals who cross borders, contributing to reshaping diasporic identities within host societies, as illustrated by Hall (1990). The ongoing negotiation and adaptation of cultural identity is embedded in memory into the evolving frameworks of movement and settlement. The need to preserve the past and identity composes collective human experiences, reaffirming that identity is constructed in the past (D'Aléssio, 1992).

Cultural Heritage:

The Evolution of The Concept

Through Anthropological Lenses

The concept of cultural heritage has evolved since the first attempt to define its meaning and significance. The evolution of the concept shows a transition from a narrow focus on tangible elements to a broader understanding that incorporates intangible dimensions, as we have previously seen through Cultural Landscapes and Cultural Routes. This shifts the movement from static, object-centered perspectives to dynamic and lived experiences. Such a transition will be explored and discussed in the following paragraphs through anthropological lenses and reflected on architectural examples.

Early heritage studies emphasized material artifacts like monuments, buildings, and physical objects, which aligned with anthropology's early focus on archaeology and material culture at the time. Scholars like Lewis Henry Morgan, Edward Burnett Tylor, and Augustus Pitt-Rivers emphasized material artifacts as representations of cultural evolution and societal progress (Barnard, 2004).

Afterward, Franz Boas (1911) argued against the evolutionist framework that characterized culture as static and material-focused, reducing it to what could be observed and preserved in physical form only. Samuels (2018) identifies Franz Boas as an important figure in introducing the concept of cultural relativism, arguing that cultures should be understood on their own terms rather than ranked according to Western standards. Although Boas acknowledged the importance of material culture, he emphasized that understanding the broader social, historical, and symbolic context was equally important (Barnard, 2004).

This idea has influenced the approach to cultural heritage by promoting appreciation for cultural diversity and emphasizing the need to protect various cultural expressions without imposing external judgments, such as ranking cultures on an evolutionary scale or valuing written traditions over oral ones. A Brazilian example illustrates the devaluation of Indigenous structures during the country's colonization, with Jesuits playing a significant role in shaping the built environment. Missions were constructed as part of the effort to evangelize the Indigenous population. In many instances, Indigenous sites were dismantled to make way for colonial structures featuring European-style churches and urban layouts based on Portuguese town-planning principles, such as the Jesuit mission of São Miguel das Missões, a UNESCO World Heritage site established in the 17th and 18th centuries (Figure 1). The archaeological site showcases the ruins of a Baroque-style

Figure 1. The Church of São Miguel, in baroque style, was built by the Italian architect Gian Batista Primoli, from 1735. Source: IPHAN, 2025



church, now celebrated as a historical landmark reflecting the cultural relations established between the Indigenous native peoples and European Jesuit missionaries. It also serves as a reminder of the imposed assimilation of Indigenous peoples, leading to a cultural rupture of their ancient values and traditions (IPHAN, 2025).

Building on Boas' ideas, anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict (1934) and Margaret Mead (1935) emphasized the dynamic and patterned nature of culture, highlighting its adaptation to historical and social contexts. This perspective was crucial for recognizing intangible heritage, including rituals, oral traditions, and knowledge systems. Later, Clifford Geertz's concept of "thick description" shifted the focus to the symbolic and experiential dimensions of culture, framing it as a system of meanings rather than merely material objects. This view reinforced recognition of the intangible aspects of heritage, a notion further developed by

Lowenthal (1985), who argued that heritage is continually reinterpreted through memory and community practices. More recent discussions, such as those by Sonkoly (2020) and Fejérdy (2012), support this processual approach, framing heritage as a social construction that evolves, demonstrating that contemporary communities actively shape both tangible and intangible elements.

The incorporation of tangible and intangible elements in cultural heritage discourses can also be seen in the Historic Centre of Salvador (a UNESCO World Heritage site, Figure 2). The colonial-period architecture, marked by Portuguese influences, baroque churches, and colorful facades, represents the tangible heritage. Meanwhile, the Afro-Brazilian traditions, music, cuisine, and religious practices (such as Candomblé) that animate the streets of Salvador embody the intangible heritage.

Figure 2. Colonial mansions of Pelourinho in the historic center and the Historic Center, Salvador, State of Bahia, Brazil.
 Source: M & G Therin Weise / Shutterstock



Early anthropology's focus on material culture has gradually evolved into a broader understanding of culture as a dynamic and lived experience that includes both the physical and non-physical aspects. Scholars such as Franz Boas, Clifford Geertz, James Clifford, and Michael Herzfeld have all contributed to this evolving perspective, emphasizing the importance of both tangible and intangible heritage in comprehending the full scope of cultural identity, memory, and meaning, as reflected in the cultural heritage discourses illustrated above. This shift in viewpoint is particularly significant in the context of migration, as migrant communities navigate new environments while simultaneously preserving, transforming, and integrating elements of their cultural identity, illustrating a dual process of adaptation and continuity.

Assimilation and the Revival of Cultural Origin

Assimilation theory can be understood as a layer that reflects the transformation that immigrant groups go through, which is often seen as a necessary process for migrants to integrate into

their new environment but is not straightforward. Such a transformation process is here understood as continuous negotiation of identity, where migrants adjust their practices to fit into the new society while still maintaining ties to their cultural memory, such as the concept of third space introduced by Bhabha (1994), reflecting a complex interaction between experiences and influences (Ribeiro, 1995). This duality is manifested in spatial and cultural practices, particularly in the architectural adaptations migrants undertake (Ribeiro, 1996). The architecture of immigrants — whether through the adaptation of existing structures or the creation of new spaces — becomes a crucial tool for preserving memories of the homeland while engaging in the cultural practices of the new country. In this sense, architectural spaces reflect the hybridization of cultural identities, where memory and identity are preserved and transformed (Lesser, 1999; Bhabha, 1994). Architecture thus serves as a space of negotiation, embodying memory, migration, and cultural adaptation.

Initially, assimilation theories focused on the integration of newcomers into the host society — social, economic, and cultural. Over time, the

theory evolved from a simple model of cultural assimilation to a more complex understanding of how immigrant groups adjust to their host societies, considering diversity, structural obstacles, and the mutual interaction between different cultures

The straight-line assimilation theory developed by Park & Burgess (1921) was expanded upon by Milton Gordon (1964), who provided a framework for understanding how minority groups integrate into dominant cultures. Park and Burgess (1921) outlined a cycle of race relations that progresses through contact, competition, accommodation, and assimilation, emphasizing cultural conformity in urban settings. Gordon (1964), however, introduced a more nuanced and multistage model of assimilation, identifying types such as cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, marital assimilation, identification assimilation, and civic assimilation. These stages highlight distinct dimensions of integration that occur at different speeds and intensities. The built environment often reflects the challenges that persist despite the stages proposed by the author, where tensions between inclusion and exclusion are reflected. For example, the favelas in Brazil highlight the incomplete nature of structural assimilation, where migrant and marginalized communities remain physically and symbolically segregated from formal urban spaces.

Favela: “Favelas and Urban Communities are popular territories originating from the various strategies used by the population to meet, generally autonomously and collectively, their housing needs and associated uses (commerce, services, leisure, culture, among others), in the face of insufficiency and inadequacy of public policies and private investments aimed at guaranteeing the right to the city [...] Favelas and urban communities express the socio-spatial inequality of Brazilian urbanization. They portray the incompleteness – at the limit, the

precariousness – of government policies and private investments to provide urban infrastructure, public services, collective equipment and environmental protection to the sites where they are located, reproducing conditions of vulnerability.” (IBGE, 2025).

On the other hand, projects such as the Immigration Museum in São Paulo aim to address these gaps by using architecture to honor migrant stories and promote inclusion.

In the 1990s, scholars responded to criticisms of traditional assimilation theory by recognizing that immigrant groups do not follow a single linear path toward integration (Jacoby, 2009; Kivisto, 2016). For example, Portes and Zhou (1993) introduced the concept of segmented assimilation to explain the varying outcomes for different immigrant groups, noting that some immigrants achieve upward mobility by entering the professional or entrepreneurial classes, while others face downward assimilation, remaining at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy (Kivisto, 2016). This theory focuses particularly on the second generation of immigrant families, emphasizing the role of selective acculturation. Immigrant children often retain aspects of their parents’ culture, which helps them succeed in the host society without fully assimilating. This selective retention of cultural elements allows second-generation immigrants to avoid downward assimilation and secure upward mobility, navigating a path that is shaped by their heritage and the opportunities available in the broader society.

For example, we can observe the idea of dual identification, which becomes crucial in the case of the third and fourth generations. These generations often identify with both their ancestral heritage and the national culture of their new home (Gans, 1997). This dual identification is visible in architectural spaces where the coexistence of

cultural influences from both the immigrants' origin and the host society can be observed. These hybrid spaces symbolically represent the ongoing process of integration while also serving as physical manifestations of the complex identities that evolve over generations.

From the 2000s, a new theory of assimilation emerged as a revision of earlier models, with sociologists such as Richard Alba and Victor Nee in *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (2003) arguing for a more complex and dynamic model of immigrant integration. The authors proposed that assimilation should be understood as a multi-dimensional and reciprocal process involving adaptation by both immigrant groups and the host society. According to Alba and Nee (2003), immigrants may retain elements of their ethnic heritage while still integrating into the economic and social structures of the host society. Like the ideas of Gans (1979), ethnic identity may persist in a more symbolic or voluntary form for younger generations, where individuals continue to identify with their heritage, but it does not define their everyday social and economic behavior. This perspective enriches the understanding of immigrant identities by emphasizing the fluidity of cultural connections and the complexity of integration, particularly in architectural spaces where these evolving identities are reflected and embodied in the built environment.

Brazilian discussions of cultural assimilation and integration have proposed alternative frameworks for understanding how diverse cultural identities coexist within the nation. Gilberto Freyre, in his work *Casa-grande & Senzala* (1933), argued that Brazil's identity emerged through a process of miscegenation, where cultural mixing — particularly of Indigenous, African, and European influences — shaped the country's social and cultural fabric. Freyre's concept of "lusotropicalism" (1933) celebrates this hybridization as

an integral aspect of Brazilian identity, framing the country as a place where different cultural traits were not just assimilated but mixed. This notion contrasts with the more rigid forms of assimilation.

Luso-tropicalism: "Lusotropicalismo, or Luso-tropicalism, was officially coined in 1951 by Gilberto Freyre when delivering an invited talk in Goa, India, during his visit to the Portuguese colonies in Africa and Asia. Freyre did not invent the concept on the spot: it evolved from his earlier analysis of Brazilian society and colonial history as a tale of three peoples (Europeans, Africans, and Indigenous) — a tale in which the Portuguese were portrayed in a positive manner, with a tendency to mix and mingle that ultimately resulted from their own history of mixtures and mingling." (Bastos & Castelo, 2024)

It is reflected architecturally in spaces such as the Pelourinho in Salvador (Figure 3), where Portuguese colonial buildings and African-influenced structures coexist. However, Freyre's vision of Brazil as a racially inclusive society was later rejected by the sociologist Florestan Fernandes in *A Integração do Negro na Sociedade de Classes* (1964) and *O Negro no Mundo Dos Brancos* (1972), which highlighted the ongoing racial inequalities and limited the full integration of non-European groups. Fernandes' work pointed out the persistence of social stratification despite the myth of racial democracy. This can also be seen in Salvador, where, despite shared cultural influences, clear socioeconomic and racial divisions still exist, limiting the true integration and equality between diverse communities. Therefore, Pelourinho, the historical center of Salvador, is a space for celebrating diversity, but it also reflects the social tensions that persist in Brazil.

Figure 3. Pelourinho in Salvador. Source: Tripadvisor



The work of Canclini (2022) explored the understanding of migration and cultural assimilation through his concept of hybrid cultures, providing a framework for understanding the nature of cultural change in contemporary societies. Although Canclini's focus extends to Latin American cities more broadly, his ideas have influenced the discourse on Brazilian cultural dynamics. This can be observed in cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, where architecture plays a key role in negotiating local traditions and global influences. These urban spaces reflect the ongoing negotiation of identities as immigrant communities adapt to their new environments while preserving cultural heritage elements. For example, the architectural landscape of São Paulo illustrates a mix of global and local influences, particularly in immigrant neighborhoods.

As noted by recent scholars (Alba and Nee, 2003; Canclini, 2022), the process of assimilation is not linear and can take many forms depending on individual and group circumstances. Thus, architecture plays an important role in this negotiation of identity, as it serves as a tangible expression of cultural memory. Through the creation of new spaces — be they homes, community centers, or public monuments — migrants reshape their environment, reconciling their past with their present. These spaces allow them to

preserve connections to their cultural heritage while engaging with the new society they inhabit simultaneously, contributing to the larger and unique narrative of assimilation, identity, and belonging.

The importance of local narratives in identifying cultural heritage becomes evident in this context. As migrants interact with the built environment, they are not passive recipients of the dominant culture but active participants in constructing spaces that reflect their evolving identities. For migrants, these places are not static; they are sites of transformation where individual histories and collective identities are inscribed and reinterpreted.

This interaction between migration, architecture, and memory highlights the complexities of assimilation. Architecture and local narratives provide migrants with a way to reconcile their heritage with their new social and physical environments. By framing cultural heritage as an evolutionary process (Sonkoly, 2012; Fejérdy, 2012; Harlov-Csórtan, 2022), communities actively participate in creating spaces that incorporate their lived experiences, contributing to the continuous reformulation of identity in a globalized world.

National Architecture, Homogenization, and Vernacular Architecture

For nation-states, architecture serves as an essential tool for constructing and expressing national identity, encompassing everything from monumental public buildings to symbols that visually and spatially define the state (Anderson, 1983; Lefebvre, 1991). These national symbols embedded in the built environment foster a sense of belonging for citizens, reinforcing their connection to the nation's collective identity (Nora, 1989). Anderson argues that nations are social constructs, uniting individuals who have never met but share a common identity through symbols, narratives, and rituals. In architecture, buildings can

serve as symbols, representing a pure and authentic reflection of the original nation, fulfilling a key requirement for the national culture narrative (Harlov-Csörtán, 2015). However, while national architecture often aims to project a unified and cohesive identity, vernacular architecture presents a contrasting narrative deeply rooted in local traditions, environmental conditions, and community-driven practices.

Architecture is a key representation of national identity, and it plays a significant role in materializing and symbolizing that identity. National architecture not only shapes a country's image on the global stage but also serves as a means to express, reinforce, or even reject specific portrayals of national identity (Moravanszky, 1998). The connection between architecture and nationalism highlights how material culture can embody a nation's values, aspirations, and collective memory.

The National Congress Building in Brasília (Figure 4.), designed by Oscar Niemeyer, is a clear example of nationalism expressed through architecture. The building structure embodies the ideals of modernism and the aspirations of Brazil as a progressive and unified nation. Built in the late 1950s as part of the Brasília city layout, it reflects the ambition of creating a cohesive national identity through innovative design and urban planning (Cavalcanti, 2006).

Several authors have also explored the relationship between architecture and national identity, often highlighting how structures reflect the nation's cultural and historical context. Lina Bo Bardi's Glass House (1951, see: Figure 5) is a significant example, blending modernist principles with sensitivity to the Brazilian environment.

The house's integration with the local landscape, the use of glass to invite nature in, and the minimalist aesthetic reflect an intention to align modern architecture with local culture and climate. Similarly, Carlos Lemos and Nestor Goulart Reis

Figure 4. National Congress Building in Brasília. Source: Filipe Frazão



Figure 5. Glass House's Inner Garden. Source: Nelson Kon



Filho focus on the historical dimension of national architecture, with Lemos's Casa Paulista (1999) documenting São Paulo's vernacular traditions and Reis Filho's *Imagens de Vilas e Cidades do Brasil Colonial* (2001) examining the colonial urban fabric as a foundation of Brazilian cultural identity. These works highlight how Brazilian architecture navigates the tension between tradition and modernity, linking global ideas with local identities to create a distinctly Brazilian architectural narrative.

In this way, national architecture functions as a site of inclusion and exclusion, reflecting the values and narratives of the nation-state while also delineating spaces of belonging and otherness. National monuments and government buildings, often designed to symbolize collective identity and national unity, can simultaneously marginalize those whose histories and identities diverge from the dominant cultural narrative (Said, 1990; Lefebvre, 1991). These structures project a homogenized vision of national memory, reflecting it in the built environment, but often fail to take into account the pluralistic realities of migrant and diasporic communities.

We have witnessed a shift from ancient times, when people were both creators and intuitive readers of buildings and environments, to modern times, where walking in a city or along a specific route requires explicit learning. Several theorists have addressed this transition, emphasizing the loss of organic connection between people and their built environments. In *A Pattern Language* (1977),

Alexander introduced how builders intuitively followed "patterns" derived from human experiences and natural interactions with space, enabling us to "read" and navigate their environments. Similarly, Norberg-Schulz (1979) argued that pre-modern societies created spaces embodying the *genius loci*, the spirit of a place. This contrasts with modern cities that prioritize abstraction, efficiency, and functionality, resulting in environments where we may feel alienated or disoriented (Lynch, 1960; Kunstler, 1993).

As Oliver explains, vernacular architecture is shaped by the specific circumstances of a community, adapting to local conditions and cultural practices (Asadpour, 2020). In Brazil, vernacular architecture exemplifies how built environments emerge from practical needs and cultural contexts rather than aesthetic theories (Figure 6). Rural techniques, such as *pau-a-pique* (wattle and daub) and *taipa-de-pilão* (rammed earth), reflect a connection with the environment.

Figure 6. Handmade mud house. Source: Dante Laurini Jr, 2023



Pau a Pique: wooden frameworks filled with woven sticks or branches, which are then covered with a mixture of clay and straw, creating a lightweight yet durable wall.

Taipa de Pilão: involves compacting earth between wooden forms to create thick, insulated walls.

These construction methods are responses to regional climates, providing resilience, thermal comfort, and low environmental impact, offering designs rooted in human experience and the environment rather than imposed theories.

Roberts (1996) highlights the significance of local materials and construction methods in vernacular architecture. Building shapes and forms serve as evidence of social and economic processes. One can "read" a building and interpret its cultural context by examining these elements. This process of interpretation is central to understanding architecture as a form of cultural expression (Tamáska, 2018; Ingraham, 2004). Vernacular architecture, in turn, is understandable in that it represents a continuous dialogue with the surrounding environment; meanwhile, modern architecture, influenced by global trends, lacks these inherently readable elements.

From Global to Local

The analogous heritage characteristic, also noted by Fejérdy (2012), is shaped by the interaction between local practices and global influences. This becomes especially evident in migrant communities, where preserving memory is not about safeguarding a fixed cultural identity but about continually negotiating and adapting that identity within the context of migration. Migrants may alter architectural spaces, cultural practices, and symbols to reflect both their homeland's heritage and the new cultural influences they encounter upon

arriving in a new environment. Thus, cultural heritage serves as a testimony to the layered processes experienced by distinct groups, where the act of remembering is continually redefined.

Halbwachs (1980) points out that memory is a social phenomenon and never entirely personal; it is shaped by the collective experiences of the group. For migrants, memory serves as both a means of survival and a tool of resistance. In the context of migration, places of memory — Nora's *lieux de mémoire* — are essential for preserving connections with the homeland. These places, whether physical structures, monuments, or everyday objects, serve as anchors to the past, allowing individuals to maintain ties to their cultural heritage even when physically distant from their home country. In this sense, architecture becomes a mediator of memory, providing a space to remember and reinterpret their cultural identity as they adjust to a new environment.

Global efforts aim to preserve cultural remnants across borders, such as monuments, artifacts, and sites. However, this universal approach often overlooks individuals' and communities' personal, lived experiences. While pointing out the growth of tensions between global and local, Fejérdy (2012) also draws attention to the need for local communities and civil society participation in the discussions, suggesting that local and regional values are a growing tendency in an attempt to preserve the unique self-identity of local communities.

A key question is how migrant groups adapt and create a sense of home in their new environment. This process involves socialization in their homeland and adjusting to new social and natural conditions. In Brazil, for instance, immigrant communities have left a lasting architectural legacy by adapting their traditional techniques to local materials and conditions. In Vale do Itajaí, German immigrants had to adjust to their new reality, where the climate and social and cultural conditions were

different, and one of the most notable changes was the addition of porches to half-timbered homes, a response to Brazil's heat (Weimer, 2005).

Another example is the Japanese neighborhood called Liberdade in São Paulo, which holds rich cultural significance as the heart of Japanese culture in Brazil and is home to one of the largest Japanese communities outside Japan (see: Figure 7). The entrance to the neighborhood is marked by the Immigrant Portal, which features a style, colors, and shapes that immediately evoke Japanese cultural identity. The portal and the neighborhood's elements contrast with the urban landscape of São Paulo, symbolizing the cultural blending and adaptation of Japanese immigrants who arrived in Brazil in the early 20th century. However, it is not only Japanese immigrants; "In the Liberdade neighborhood, the colonial city, the industrial city and the global city meet and confront each other through the different social groups that have settled there over the last four centuries" (da Cruz Paina, 2022). In addition to the Japanese presence, we also observe today the Korean and Chinese communities, as well as the attempts to erase the Black presence in the region (Popperl, 2019).

From the immigrant's perspective, moving from one place to another reveals additional layers of

transformation, including nationalist influences that shape collective identity. Migrants and diaspora communities, with their cross-border connections, often challenge the idea of national homogeneity. They cultivate fluid identities that transcend traditional national boundaries, sometimes leading to their being perceived as problematic (Hall, 1990). The meanings assigned to places, stored in collective memory, provide a sense of stability. Yet, these transnational identities complicate the traditional nationalist narratives, as they embody the coexistence of multiple cultural influences within a single spatial context, demonstrating how heritage and identity are continually redefined through migration and adaptation.

In the context of global and local understandings of heritage, memories play a crucial role in shaping these spaces. Each nation has its own collective memory connected to its history, values, and cultural symbols. Simultaneously, ethnic communities within that nation preserve their own distinct memories and identities, often creating unique spaces where their heritage is honored and maintained.

This tension between local ethnic heritage and national identity is not always harmonious, and it can lead to contradictions and conflicts. Migrant

Figure 7. Liberdade neighborhood, SP with the oriental lamps and portal / Chapel of Nossa Senhora dos Aflitos in the background. Source: Edu Lyra, 2022 / Alf Ribeiro, 2014



communities in host countries often find themselves caught between the local heritage of the nation-state and their own ethnic and cultural memories, reflecting broader tensions between global and local identities in the built environment (Bhabha, 1994; Assmann, 2011).

Concluding Remarks

This research analyzes architecture through an anthropological lens, focusing on its subjectivity and cultural significance. Rather than objectively documenting architecture, this investigation seeks to understand how it embodies cultural identities, experiences, and relationships with the environment. By examining the arrangement of forms, materials, patterns, details, and meanings, we can "read" a building and interpret it within its context, which will be deeply explored through collective memory. This unique combination of elements will help describe the local distinctiveness in future work focusing on the Hungarian Cultural Route of Jaraguá do Sul, SC, Brazil.

Immigrant architecture is more than a physical structure; it is a dynamic space where cultural heritage is preserved, transformed, and negotiated. Migrants adapt their environments to reflect both their roots and influences from their host country, engaging in a continuous process of identity formation. To explore this empirically, memory narratives gathered through interviews and observations of architectural sites in Jaraguá do Sul, Brazil, and Veszprém County, Hungary, will later reveal how spaces embody collective memory and cultural adaptation. This approach highlights how Hungarian immigrants' architectural choices reflect their histories and ongoing negotiations between homeland and Brazilian influences.

This will contribute to a deeper understanding of immigrant experiences and the cultural diversity shaped by migration and focus on the answer to how the Hungarian immigrant from a rural area

created a new home in Brazil. How did they assimilate to the local issues and environment? And what are the paths of a hybrid cultural space on the Hungarian Cultural Road?

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