

Planning for Urban Regeneration - A Case of Thangasseri, Kollam District

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Abstract: *Urban regeneration is an integrated technique, which aims at bringing about long-term and sustainable development in the economic, physical, social and environmental factors of a region that has been facing deterioration due to external factors such as Urbanization, change in Govt policies etc. The below article aims to understand the strengths and weakness of the delineated area and suggest recommendations and policy changes to regenerate the area by leveraging its unexplored heritage potential. Indian cities are diverse and vivacious and each region can be assessed in its own historical and traditional background. This paper focuses on exploring the key attributes of Heritage led regeneration by analysing relevant factors of Thangasseri area of Kollam District, Kerala. Thangasseri was once the Heritage hub and CBD of Kollam region, hosting lion's share of its trade and commercial activities. Off late due to urbanization and scattered public infrastructure, the area lost its prominence though highly potential. The study intends to explore the need Urban regeneration, backed by ample literature study and provide specific recommendations that could address the deficiencies.*

Keywords: Urban regeneration, sustainable, urban policy, Thangasseri

1. Introduction

Human settlements planning is as ever evolving process as the settlements are organic in nature, dynamic and sensitive to external changes in social, political and economic factors. Urban development is a continuous and resourceful metabolic process. Urban regeneration is a widely practiced phenomenon in most parts of the world but very less studied as a technique before implementation. Many cities and regions have undergone regeneration processes through Governments, developmental agencies, financial institutions and other social organizations but there is no single recommended form of urban regeneration practice and no single authoritative source of information.

Various authors define regeneration differently among them the one given by Peter Robert and Hugh Sykes (2000) is well accepted; they describe the term regeneration as a "Comprehensive & integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change"[1]. So basically Regeneration includes the development of the land along with the neighbouring structures, landscape, services and supporting infrastructure in a regional scale and includes people's participation, partnership & empowerment

As Redevelopment/regeneration projects without people's participation invariably turn into case studies of failure, it is important to first organise the community so that interaction on a day-to-day basis becomes easy. This can be successfully executed by creating groups of all internal stakeholders and communities of the project areas. Discussions and interactions with these groups may be conducted while ensuring their active participation in the process of framing policy decisions. The above formed groups may be also empowered to be responsible for the introduction and

maintenance of changes made. They will also ensure that there is justice to all in the new plan and resources are utilized optimally. These committees can also mobilise some funds, which can be helpful in the provision and maintenance of social infrastructure; to build a sense of ownership among the residents in the project areas.

2. Methods and actions to achieve urban regeneration

The various actions and methods taken to achieve urban regeneration can be summarized in the following

a) Economic Regeneration

Economic regeneration is needed to counter the economic deterioration experienced by cities with the changes in how the economy operates and the enhancing opportunities of globalization. The industrial revolution made many major towns to focus on production, culture and community, nevertheless the last few decades we had witnessed loss of employment and scattering of population, to other economic structures. After decades of continued development, the economic role of a city in a modern economy is being questioned due to the shift of activities to other areas where economic activities are being performed more efficiently without hindrances and restrictions

b) Physical Regeneration

Physical renewal is not a mandatory factor in Urban regeneration but could be the heart of regeneration in some cases. The success of physical regeneration is to comprehend the restraints and the possibilities of the existing physical infrastructure and the role improvement can play in allowing, and promoting, renewal at regional level. Effective understanding of the potential needs an implementation strategy, which identifies and leverages of the changes under way in financial and community activity, funding systems,

related institutions, ownership policy and the evolving visions of roles the city is expected to play.

c) Social & Community Interventions

Urban regeneration are applied most effectively when schemes works positively with the native and local community especially those who need support. In this mode of intervention or regeneration, the social fabric of the region is studied in detail with a focus on varying communities and their natural interactions between themselves. Being very sensitive, the related policy factors require to be co-ordinated and managed with great care. Community organisations perform a significant part in capacity building and inspiring the involvement and empowerment of people. The policy-makers and scheme managers require to have higher clarity on the factors that affect to meaningful development the community.

d) Employment, Education & Training

Cities are gradually becoming polarised, socially and economically due to Population movements and policy changes. Most Cities have their own unique assets as avenues of service provision and consumption, and any development must work towards leveraging these advantages. Issues of education and training need to be effectively addressed among solutions thereby resulting job creation and economic welfare. Local action must adapt to changed national labour market policies, which now emphasise supply side measures instead of demand side and favour partnership approaches over corporatism. The growing number of agencies increases the need for coordination of actions and interventions at the local level like Develop a clear understanding of trends in the local labour market and its inherent strengths and weaknesses.

e) Housing Regeneration

New housing can be a driver of urban regeneration, and decent housing is an essential ingredient of any regeneration scheme. Decent housing stimulates both physical and economic improvement, and the resulting enhancements in turn stimulate new investment and new opportunities as the urban environment once again becomes full of life and enterprise.

f) Heritage Led Regeneration

Regeneration basically is a planning method of renewing, enhancing and integrating the old historic environment to a new, modern, economically thriving environment. Heritage led regeneration aims towards exploring the past traditions, customs and practises of a region and how it interacted with the the physical, social, environmental and economic conditions. Heritage led Regeneration helps to bring back the past glory of a region which got deteriorated over time. The activity will involve identification and conservation of heritage followed by steps towards its promotion and regeneration.

3. Aim and Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is the Regeneration and

transformation of 'Historic core' of Thangassery that has faced neglect due to sub-urbanization through assessment of issues and requirements specific to this area and finding solutions to sustain its identity.

The objectives of the study are:

- To understand the concept of Urban Regeneration and its planning.
- To assess the existing scenario of the core area and factors governing its development.
- To analyse ongoing projects and proposals in the area, that could supplement this process
- Recommend solutions to address issues; propose interventions to streamline efforts towards renewal of region.

4. Methodology

Planning for Regeneration

1. Research Preparation

- Identification of project particulars.
- Study concerns and potentials.
- Field survey to understand existing scenario
- Formulation of Aim objective, scope and limitations of the study

2. Literature review & Case study

- Literature review & Data mining on related topics.
- Analysing associated policies and regulations.
- Case study of comparable exercise across world cities.
- Field study of similar regions and concepts.

3. Data Collection & Analysis

- Formulate questionnaire on issues & expectations
- Field survey with local residents & stakeholders.
- Analysis of response and patterns for judgement.

4. Propose solutions

- Present proposed model of initiatives to achieve aim.
- Suggest interventions on existing projects/proposals
- Impact of exercise on economic & social fabric of the region

5. Literature Study

The core area within Kollam Corporation premises which carries historical significance and rich heritage, but neglected to decay, due to urbanization and Commercialization. Though there were many scattered places within the limits of study area, the geographical region with Thangassery as its core, stood out exhibiting its profuse heritage through unique buildings and community mix.

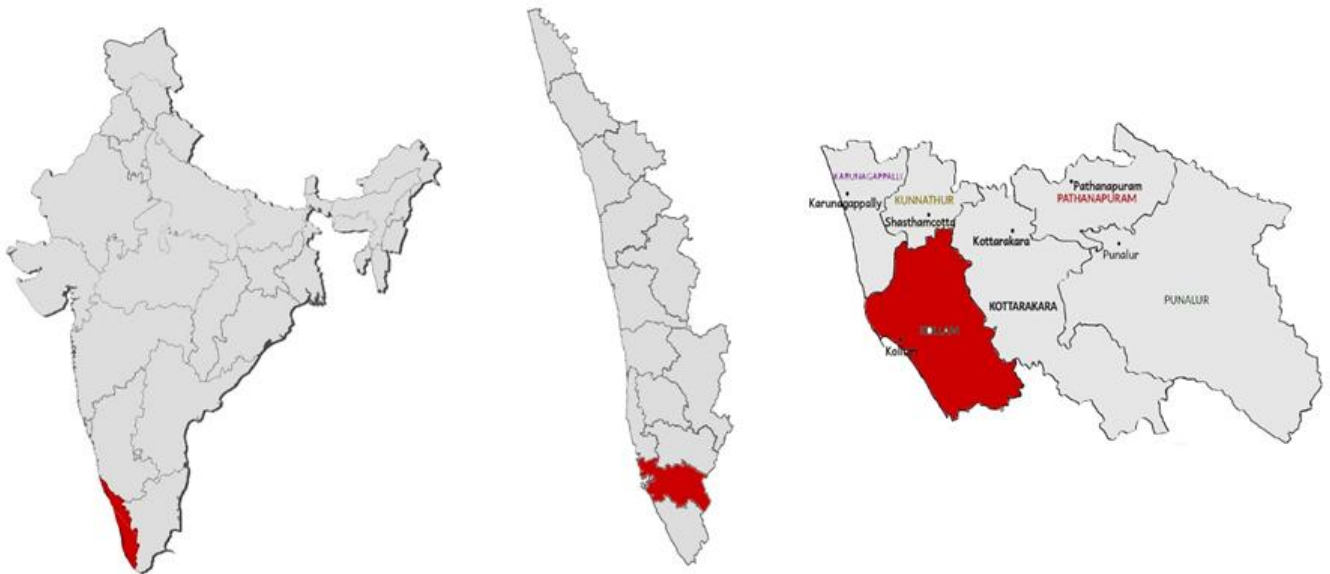


Figure 2: Geographical location of study area

Historical places and buildings were concentrated near the core area of Thangassery which was sufficiently surrounded by places of worship and residential establishments. Electoral wards were carefully selected to include the unique native community, who's ancestors came in and settled here from various parts of the world before many centuries. Region boundaries are extended wherever required to include old trade centres and historical monuments.

History of the study area

Thangassery, the port of Kollam had been an important trading center for many centuries. Its significance as a landing point for traders is evident from its colonial history when there were repeated attempts to take over possession of this location.



Figure 5: 15th Century arrival of Portuguese



Figure 4. 11th -14th Century Medieval Period

Being an important site, Kollam was frequently mapped by Europeans from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.

The historical maps and views of Kollam contain vital information about the history, archaeology and geography of the area. Remote sensing and GIS can provide a real-world spatial context to these archived geographical documents of varied scales and types, drawn at different times spanning more than four centuries. Kollam town was identified as one of the oldest town with rich history and cultural values. The remains of these can be seen in many places as monuments and heritage precincts.

Demographics of Study Area

The study area covers an area of 3.86 sq.km five wards and has a population of 35,603 as below:

Ward 47	Pallithottam	5479
Ward 48	Port	5438
Ward 49	Kacherry	8320
Ward 50	Kaikulangara	7476
Ward 51	Thangassery	9090



Figure 6: Geographical location of study area

Heritage Sites in Study Area

The major Heritage sites as identified through Primary research and through secondary data are given below;

- a) Bishop House
- b) Infant Jesus Church
- c) Heritage Bungalow
- d) Mount Carmel School
- e) Dutch/ English Cemetery
- f) Thangassery Light House
- g) Thangassery Breakwater
- h) Thangassery Fort
- i) Thangassery Beach+ Port
- j) Post Office
- k) Holy Cross Church
- l) Thangassery Arch (known as Kaaval)
- m) Ammachiveedu Temple
- n) Rameshwaram Temple
- o) Jonakapuram Mosque
- p) Our Lady of Purification Church
- q) Thirumullavaram Sree Mahavishunu temple
- r) St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church
- s) Kottarakkulam Sree Mahaganapathy Temple
- t) Thirumala Devaswam Balaji Temple
- u) Anandavalleeswaram Temple

Regeneration strategies

The Heritage Led Regeneration may be strategized into two broad phases as below

a) Understand, Preserve and Protect

- The phase aims at Conservation of Heritage
- Understand and preserve cultural heritage through Knowledge and Planning tools.
- Create awareness about the cultural heritage of the place and protect the heritage buildings from demolition through civic engagement.
- Ensure that effective preservation policies and regulations are included in the Comprehensive Development Plan and manage the area through effective regulatory systems.

b) Promote, Expand and Celebrate

- Increase the visibility of Thangassery cultural heritage sites, events and activities via signage, infrastructure improvements and web presence.
- Ensure sustainable growth in the heritage precinct.

6. Conclusion

Regeneration needs careful planning and decision making and an overall inclusive approach. Creating or drafting policies based on mere guidelines isn't a well appreciated approach. It should be done with due consideration about the heritage conservation with more importance. Heritage tourism is not perceived positively by the locals because of the negative perception about the tourists and tourism in Thangassery. Hence, heritage tourism should be discussed with the owners, mitigate the negative perception of tourism, address their needs and encourage them to be a part of it. Through urban regeneration the heritage buildings and cultural building can, boost heritage tourism and cultural tourism and to manage the heritage area.

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Author Profile



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