

Potentials of Revitalizing the Industrial Heritage of Kuttichira to Infuse a Sense of History in Calicut, India

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Abstract

Maritime trade, immigration and industrialization have resulted in the production of rich cultural narratives that port cities have long embodied as centers of industrial activities. Unfortunately, a large number of these locations, many of which date back to important social and economic turning points in the histories of various parts of the world remain neglected leading to dilapidation. In fact, this is particularly the situation in India. In this context, this research examines the industrial heritage Kuttichira, where the earliest recorded trade settlement in Calicut city in Kerala, India still remains albeit in a poor state.

This research employs multiple research techniques to gather data. It first examines secondary literature. It then examines a case study within which a site visit and direct observations were conducted to observe the present condition of the heritage. An interview with an expert and interactions with a few local residents have also been carried out in order to understand the industrial heritage. Maps and drawings were created using the data gathered.

The paper identifies the potentials of this industrial heritage to provide a sense of history and identity to the place. It concludes that heritage should be utilized for restoring the intangible heritage of the area, thus connecting the area with the current growth of the city.

Keywords: Calicut (Kozhikode), Industrial Heritage, Adaptive re- use, Tangible Heritage, Intangible Heritage

Introduction

On the Malabar Coast in Southern India, the city of Kozhikode, also known as Calicut is located in the state of Kerala. Calicut city has a population of 5.50 lakhs. Since the early middle ages, Calicut has been a town with many different ethnic and religious groups. The majority of people identify as Hindus, followed by Muslims and Christians (Census population, 2011 data). The sea governed Calicut's history, as it did for other coastal regions. Calicut held an important position within the Malabar region, regarded as a secure trading hub in history attracting merchants from

Arab, Chinese, and European origins including Portuguese, Dutch, and lastly British traders (Hassan, Manu, Kumaradas and Ampotti, 2020). The plentiful availability of spices, agricultural goods etc. sparked the growth of a bustling port and in Kerala's past, Calicut was regarded as a significant center of trade (Ansu and Anjaneyulu, 2013).

The Arab settlement in an area namely Kuttichira along the central coastline of Calicut city is regarded as the first recorded trade settlement in Calicut (Manohar, 2011). Kuttichira is an enclave of the Muslim community, locally known as Mappilas in Kerala (Kanchana, 2012). This is the area in which the city started growing. The influence of this historic area on the growth, culture, lifestyle and architectural style of the city gave a strong identity to Calicut as a port city. Unfortunately, the area is not given proper recognition. However, people of Kerala are aware of the trade history of Calicut from the time Vasco da Gama landed. The trade history of the region before that is unknown in the larger context. The saddest part is that, despite its historical significance, the industrial heritage of Kuttichira finds itself almost invisible in literature. Unfortunately, this neglect is reflected in the present state of this historic edge due to various urban transformations in the city. These began with several infrastructure developments that occurred progressively in the city when it was under the rule of the Europeans, especially the British.

Nevertheless, there are studies examining the core of Kuttichira settlement, which contains the famous mosque structures and traditional residences (Abdurahiman, 2024; Abdurahiman, 2024b; Manohar, 2011; (Krishnakumar, 2015), while others are dedicating their efforts to examine the core of Kuttichira settlement, which contains the famous mosque structures and traditional residences. However, the remnants of the maritime trade, such as the row of warehouses and the old pier structure along the seafront are somehow not receiving the necessary attention.

Jagatramkar et al. (2024), show that, in urban areas, the rapid modernization and infrastructure developments have accelerated the rate of transformations in indigenous architecture following the damage of the same. Rapid urbanization, exponential growth in population and economic development is resulting in the decline of traditional architectural practices (Bhardwaj and Garg, 2016). Urban regeneration efforts mainly prioritize the physical and economic aspects, often overlooking socio-cultural factors which are essential for preserving community identity and heritage (Abdurahiman, Kasthurba and Nuzhat, 2024). This is visible in the case of Kuttichira as well. Indeed, Kuttichira, which served as the gateway to the city in the historic past is now acting as the backyard of Calicut city.



Fig. 1: Kuttichira Past and Present

Source: Author¹

In this context, the aim of this research is to facilitate the revitalization of the industrial heritage of Kuttichira. The key objectives are:

1. To identify the industrial heritage of Kuttichira.
2. To document the present condition of the industrial heritage in terms of transformations and the human activities in the study area.
3. To recommend strategies to revitalize the industrial heritage of Kuttichira to connect the historic stretch with the current direction of city growth.

Theoretical Framework

The term 'historic monument' used in the Venice Charter in 1964 was interpreted by ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) in Citation 1965 as 'monument' and

'site', then by UNESCO, (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), in Citation 1968 as 'cultural property' to incorporate tangible and intangible heritage (Ahmed, 2006).

Industrial heritage is considered as a sub field of heritage that originates from cultural heritage. Hence, the meaning and significance may associate with the charters of cultural heritage (Liu, Zhao and Yang, 2018). UNESCO defines cultural heritage as artifacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites and museums that hold various types of values like symbolic, historical, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological, anthropological, scientific and social significance. This consists of tangible heritage and intangible cultural heritage incorporated into cultural and natural heritage objects, sites or monuments (UNESCO, 2009).

However, an exclusive international organization for the conservation of industrial heritage was formally established in 1973, namely TICCIH, which stands for The International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage. The First International Conference for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage in the year 1973 in Iron Bridge, England, which is the historic symbol of industrial revolution, paved the way for the establishment of this worldwide organization. The organization became an adviser to ICOMOS later in the year 2000.

According to TICCIH, industrial heritage comprises of the remains of industrial culture that hold historical, technological, social, architectural or scientific significance. These remnants include structures and equipment, workshops, mills, factories, mines, processing and refining sites, warehouses, energy generation sites, transportation infrastructure and facilities for social activities associated to industries like housing, worship or education (Hughes, 2018). TICCIH adopted its Nizhny Tagil Charter for the Industrial Heritage in the year 2003, a first international reference text to guide protection and conservation in the field (Loures, 2008). Presently this charter is the most important international accomplishment for the conservation of industrial heritage (Ghanbari, 2018). According to Nizhny Tagil Charter, the values of industrial heritage (TICCIH, 2003) are:

1. Historical values
2. Social values
3. Technological and scientific values
4. Aesthetic values
5. Rarity values

In continuation to the Charter, The Dublin Principles which is a joint initiative by ICOMOS and TICCIH for the conservation of industrial heritage sites, structures, areas and landscapes was formulated in 2011 (ICOMOS and TICCIH, 2011). Specific to Asian countries, The Taipei Declaration for Asian Industrial Heritage was established in 2012 to preserve and promote industrial heritage across Asia. According to Iqbal (2022), this declaration recognizes the historical, cultural and economic values of industrial heritage in Asia and encourages its protection (

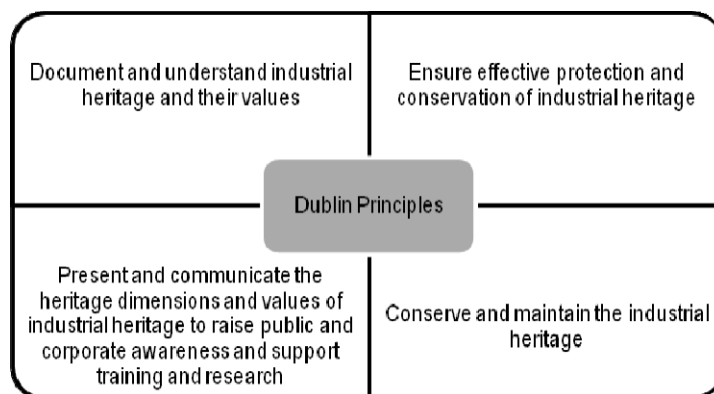


Fig. 2: Dublin Principles

Source: ICOMOC and TICCIH, 2011

In the context of India, Archeological Survey of India, ASI founded in 1861 is a government agency tasked in conducting archeological research and overseeing the protection of cultural heritage. ASI serves as the custodian of our 'National Monuments,' while state governments and

various union territories protect monuments and archaeological sites of regional importance. Moreover, some cities like Mumbai, Hyderabad, Delhi and Nagpur control their own heritage buildings through their local municipal bodies. Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, INTACH is another Non-Governmental Organization started in 1984 aiming at cultural heritage conservation in India, though it does not have a statutory designation. There is currently no comprehensive legislation or guidance in India for the conservation of industrial heritage in the country (Gupta, 2023).

In this context, the paper employs the theoretical premise of industrial heritage, as formulated in Dublin Principles, focusing on the documentation part of industrial heritage. It thus examines a case study to understand its values.

Review of Literature

Sites recognized as industrial heritage, where the “remnant” materials of the industrial culture (Loures, 2008) are traced constitute an important part of the built environment, providing both tangible and intangible links to the past and having the capacity to impact present and future urban planning (Nepravishta, Mezini and Baruti, 2017). According to Loures (2008), the assessment of industrial heritage is often limited to the visual values rather than any respect to its functional and historic value. Unfortunately, a large number of these locations, many of which date back to important social and economic turning points in the history of various parts of the world remain neglected. This is particularly so in the context of India.

According to Gupta (2023), awareness about India’s industrial heritage is very poor. A lot of our heritage has disappeared due to rapid urbanization and modernization. Tipnis et al. (2021) show that while the idea of urban heritage conservation is slowly developing, the concept of industrial heritage conservation is almost non-existent in India. Most industrial heritage sites are vulnerable to loss or substitution on the pretext of being considered too ordinary to be preserved. According to Joshi (2019), lying beneath the surface of these industrial sites are the intangible memories of the past. Gupta (2023) says that in India, the heritage tagged ‘protected’, or listed by INTACH, is primarily focused on monuments, with industrial heritage largely ignored. The problem is not only in the limited definition or identification of industrial heritage in India. Even the overall relationship of such sites is not seen within its context due to the lack of any comprehensive cultural policy or legislation for such sites.

Globally, there is a growing literature discussing the relevance of industrial heritage, its identification and strategies to integrate heritage with the city redevelopment plans. Mieg et al. (2014), through diverse case studies across the globe demonstrate that, despite great differences in understanding conservation and development, industrial heritage sites become central to urban transformation and its planning practices. Oevermann (2019) suggests eight criteria to structure good practice in managing the industrial heritage sites. They are management, conservation, reuse, community engagement, sustainable development, education, urban development and research. Patel (2020) says that industrial heritage sites have a scope to develop into various functional uses like recreational area, commercial activities, working centers, housing development and cultural centers. According to Andrade et al. (2021), the museumization and understating of industrial heritage can not otherwise saturate those landscapes that are ingrained in the memory and meaning of the place.

Cultural heritage conservation has many positive implications for the state as well as the community. Tavares et al. (2021) list them as the capacity to elevate property values, accelerate growth in heritage tourism and the adaptive reuse of buildings for the current needs. Moreover, preserving cultural assets boosts local economies and opens opportunities for business ventures and employment growth. According to Arbab et al. (2021), what is more important is the utilization of the inherent capabilities of industrial heritage to support community well-being, encourage social inclusion and enhance local identity. Halim et al. (2021) have a similar argument that community involvement and public awareness play pivotal roles in the preservation of the identity of historic buildings. Naaz et al. (2023) also point out the positive output of it saying that engaging local communities fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, enabling a collective effort to preserve heritage.

Many of the studies globally discuss the potential of adaptive reuse strategies in industrial heritage, which also activate the intangible heritage of those sites. For example, Chen et al. (2016) provide an extensive analysis of adaptive reuse strategies employed in repurposing industrial heritage sites for cultural purposes in three different Chinese cities. With an insightful analysis through relevant case studies, they explore the challenges, opportunities and best practices associated with the transformation of former inactive industrial sites into active cultural hubs.

Andrade et al. (2021) say that adaptive reuse provides an opportunity and the reuse of buildings becomes a form of redevelopment of the port-city interface spaces, where the tangible and intangible heritage of the past is valued and preserved for the future, while being given a new purpose as part of the ongoing social, economic, environmental and cultural transformation of the city. In the context of old industrial buildings in disuse at the port cities, they discuss that adaptive reuse changes port heritage from a “cost” to an “investment” for society.

In line with these studies, there are also those who study the relevance of place making approaches of the cultural heritage sites. Ramineni et al. (2023) emphasize the place making strategies in heritage conservation, infrastructure development and community-based tourist approaches taking the case of Melukote in Karnataka, India. Thamrin et al. (2024) describe the transformations of a local heritage as a historic public space through cultural, social and economic changes, taking the case study of Medan Kesawan Area and Semarang Kota Lama in Indonesia. Researchers are also looking at the potential of tourism as a catalyst for the preservation of industrial heritage. Indeed, industrial heritage tourism is viewed as a valuable resource with its power for economic revival, architectural restoration, museum development and urban and spatial planning (Xie, 2015).

There is a therefore a need to incorporate industrial heritage into urban planning of cities. Literature shows that by integrating historical stories of industrial heritage with contemporary urban planning, these changes not just protect the industrial cultural heritage but also generate new life into urban environments adding to cultural diversity and improving the experiences of both the locals and the tourists.

Research Methodology

This research employs a case study method: It examines the case of Kuttichira, in Calicut city in Kerala, India.

The data collection techniques employed are as follows:

1. Secondary literature from journals, student thesis, student dissertations and newspaper articles on the relevance of industrial heritage of Kuttichira and its values.
2. An interview with an expert on the history of the area, Mr. K. Mohan, a member and former convener of INTACH Calicut chapter and interactions with a few local residents.
3. Site visit to document the area and to identify the tangible industrial heritage.
4. Direct observation and visual survey through photographs to observe the present condition of this heritage, the human activities and encroachments.

Maps and drawings were created and analyzed with the gathered data. Recommendations were proposed on the management of industrial heritage of the study area based on the review of literature derived from across the globe.

The Case Study

Kuttichira is among the oldest historic settlements in the district of Calicut, located in the Malabar region of Kerala, India. The settlement started with the Arab merchants involved in sea trade during this rule. The region is mainly a Mappila community surrounded by the Arabian Sea to the West, the Kallazi River to the South and the Valiyangadi market to the North.

May, 2024

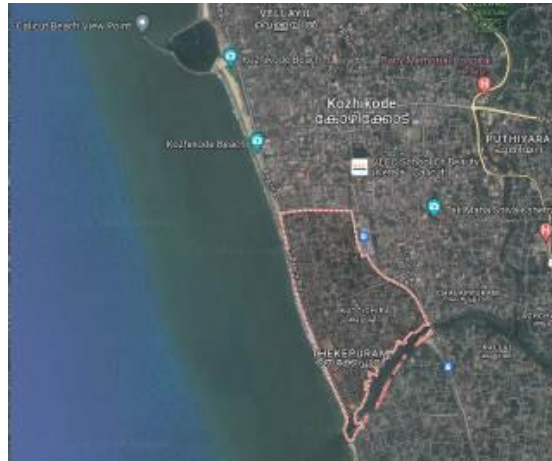


Fig. 3: Location of Kuttichira in Calicut, Kerala, India
Source: Google map 2024

Findings

Historical Relevance of Kuttichira

The history of trade in Calicut was unaware to the populace until Vasco da Gama paid the Calicut Zamorin Raja a visit in 1498 A.D (Nunn and Kumar, 2022). The settlements and trade connections in Calicut have a longer and more illustrious history than this. Some historians believe that Arab migration to Kerala for trade activities could have started as far back as the seventh century. The reason for this was primarily due to the land's lineage and involvement in maritime commerce. Islam came to Kerala primarily through sea trade. In the past, Mappila resided in communities along the Kerala coastline, specifically in the northern area. The Arab settlement in Kuttichira is regarded as the first recorded settlement in the historical growth of Calicut during the period of 7th to 14th century (Manohar, 2011). The potential of the Arabian Sea, the Valiyangadi market, the Kallazi River led to Kuttichira's development as one of the most significant trade hubs for the global timber industry.

Table 1: Recorded Trade Settlements in Calicut along Timeline

Source: Manohar, 2011

Sl no.	Recorded timeline	Chronology of development	Recorded settlement in Calicut
1	-	Trade relation with Ethiopia, Greece, Somalia, Eritrea and Egypt	-
2	-	Trade relation with Rome and Isreal	-
3	7th to 14th century	Trade relation with Arabs	Kuttichira, Ildiyangara
4	14th century	Trade relation with Chinese	Silk street in Valiyangadi, Area near Tagore centenary Hall
5	-	Trade relation with Russia	-
6	14th to 15th century	Trade relation with Gujarathis and Jews	Gujarathi street in Kuttichira, Jootha bazaar in Kuttichira
7	15th to 17th century	Trade relation with Portugal	Mouth of Beypore river
8	17th century	Trade relation with Geneva and Holland	-
9	17th to 20th century	British rule in Calicut	Convent road, West Hill, near Mananchira
10	1956	Post-independence- State of Kerala formed	
11	1957	Calicut district formed	



Fig. 4: Presence of Arab Settlement in Calicut along the Kuttichira Coast before the Portuguese Arrival (before 15th century). The Boundary of the Settlement is defined by Arabian Sea, the Valiyangadi Market, Kallazi River and the Timber Industries.

Source: Author¹

The unique cultural identity distinguishes this section of the city from others (Krishnakumar, 2015). The descendants of the wealthy trading society established themselves in the region and created their land containing spacious residences, mosques, and commercial zones (Abdurahiman, Kasthurba and Nuzhat, 2024). Kuttichira has drawn attention from many people fascinated by the historic aspects of the area including Islamic traditions, past events, unique architectural style and ethnic cuisine (Nath, 2019). The indigenous cuisine and delicacies, renowned as the Malabari Cuisine for the tourists across the world has evolved under the influences of the trade relations with the Arabs (Master Plan for Kozhikode Urban Area – 2035).

Industrial Heritage of Kuttichira

The industrial heritage of Kuttichira as a result of the trade interaction with the Arabs is mirrored in the tangible heritage remains along the sea front including a long stretch of abandoned warehouse structures, the remains of the old south pier and the open spaces around these warehouses. The intangible heritage derived from the Arabs like the cuisine (Abdurahiman, Kasthurba and Nuzhat, 2024) and the business lifestyle of the area also gives an identity to the area.

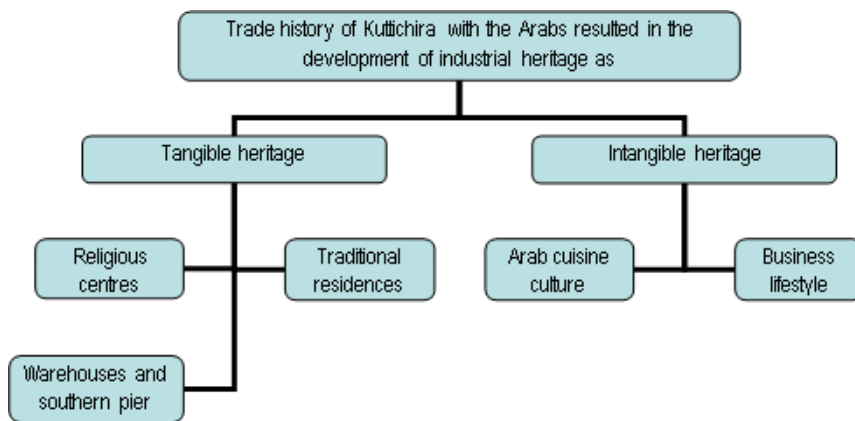


Fig. 5: Industrial Heritage of Kuttichira

Source: Author¹

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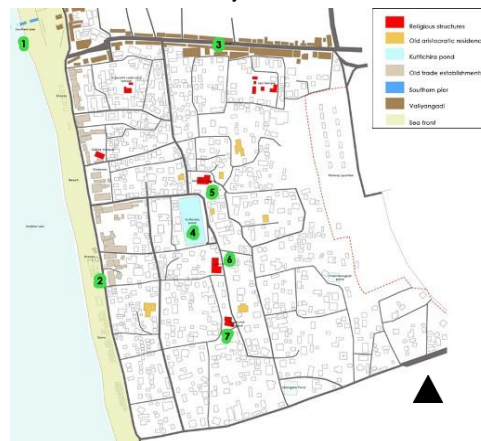


Fig. 6: Tangible Heritage Mapping of Kuttichira
Source: Author¹ documentation

Historic Value of Industrial Heritage

The tangible cultural heritage in Kuttichira is a unique representation of the Islamic culture introduced by the Arab trading society established through the skills of local Hindu artisans. These structures serve as evidence of the significant historical past and the unity among different communities along the coast. The Mappilas controlled the timber and spice trade by transporting goods from the interior to the warehouses near the port, where they sold them to Arab and other foreign traders. Being historically the most significant commercial center of South East Asia for the trade of spices and wood, the Kuttichira beachfront has significant historical value. The abandoned warehouse structures and the old south pier, one of the two 150-year-old piers in the history of Calicut, remains at the western boundary of Kuttichira, serves as evidence that the area had a traditional business lifestyle in the past.

In the interview with K. Mohan, former convener of the Calicut chapter INTACH (2015), he says that these bridges were in use up to the late 1960s and still have glowing memories of hectic activities going on in the area. It is the only commercial hub that kept an international monopoly in the timber trade at those times. The country boats, locally referred to as "Uru" filled the entire sea stretch at the past. This area was also used to be known for its horse commerce. Near the south pier is a place called 'Horse's Jumping Point' where horses brought from Gujarat and Arabia were made to jump into the water, swim and gallop along the shore, being displayed for sale (Master Plan for Kozhikode Urban Area – 2035). The Arabs' warehouses along the seashore road serve as symbols or memories of the long history of trading. The legendary Kuttichira cuisine, which was influenced by Arab culinary traditions, is popular throughout North Kerala. People from all across Northern Kerala come to Kuttichira during Ramadan to eat street food (Sreenivasan, 2014).



Fig. 7: Old South Pier- Old Photograph

Source: <https://kallivalli.blogspot.com/2013/08/the-calicut-3-sea-bridge-pier-light.html>



Fig. 8: Old South Pier in Kuttichira- Present Day
Source: Author¹




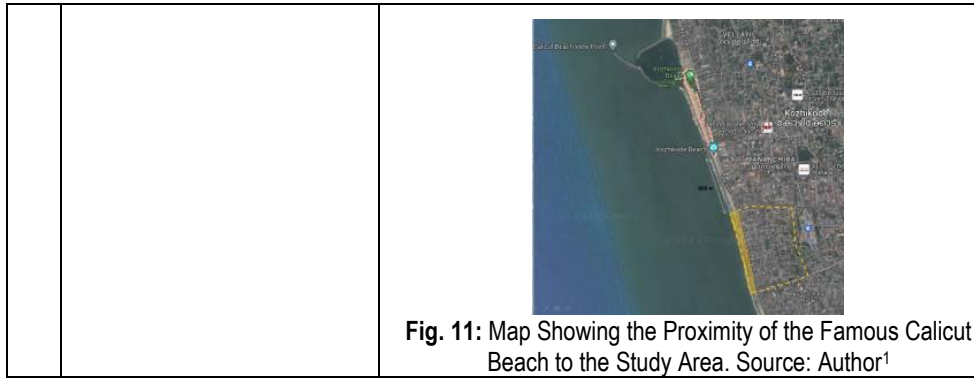
Fig. 9: Abandoned Warehouses along the Seafront
Source: Author¹

Discussion






Present Condition of the Industrial Heritage

Table 2: Analysis of the Present Condition of the Industrial Heritage
Source: Author¹

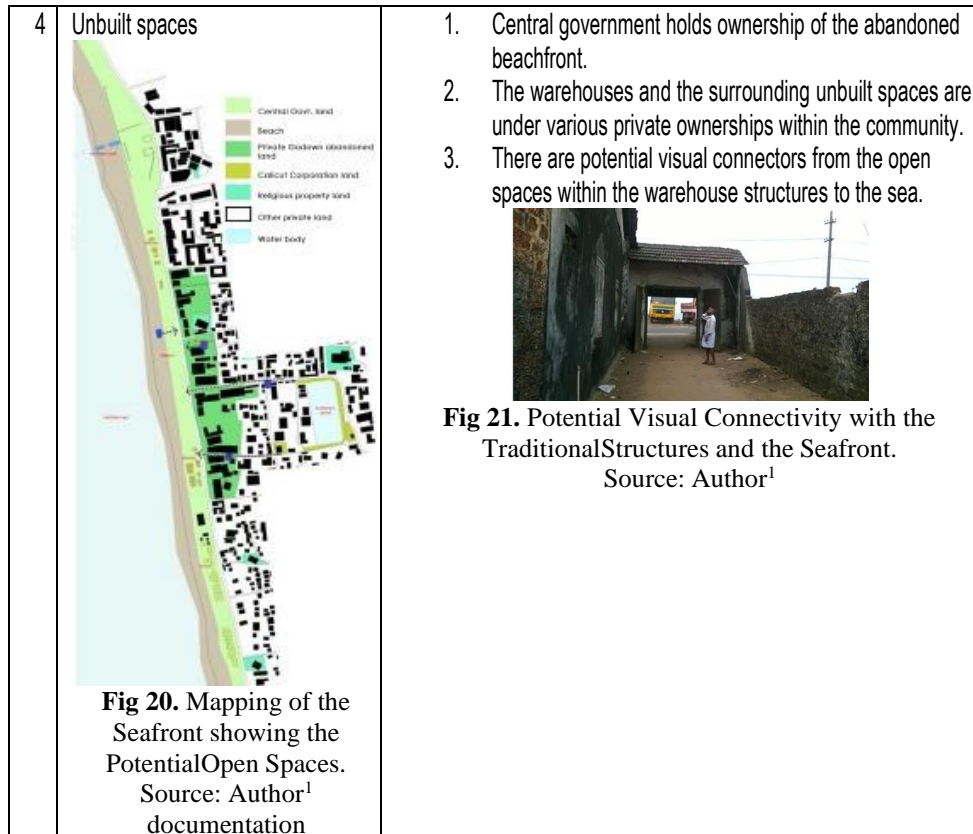
No	Factor	Analysis of the present condition
1	Connectivity with the present city core	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kuttichira, while in proximity to Calicut's primary transport hubs and public landmarks, finds itself disconnected by a railway line established during the British colonial era. 2. Calicut beach, which is the major public space of the city, is located at the north, less than 1km from the study area, which presently does not have movement between.  <p>Fig. 10: Railway Line Disconnecting Kuttichira from the Newer Part of Calicut City. Source: Author¹</p>



<p>2</p>	<p>Building typology</p> <p>Fig 12. Mapping of the Seafront showing the Present Typology of Warehouses. Source: Author¹ documentation</p>	<p>The structures lining the seafront remain either as abandoned, or under pressure of alterations disregarding their contextual significance.</p> <p>Fig. 13: Abandoned Warehouses along the Seafront. Source: Author¹</p> <p>Fig. 14: Warehouses under the Pressure of Transformation Unrelated to the Context. Source: Author¹</p>
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<p>3</p>	<p>Activities along the seafront</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The once-thriving seafront now stands as a stark contrast to its historical happenings, with the periphery transformed to dumpsites and lorry parking lots. 2. Unauthorized settlements further fragment the coastline, disrupting its natural continuity. 3. The sea front remains deserted day and night, with even the local people not using it.  <p>Fig 16: Lorry Parking along the Warehouse Stretch and the Beach. Source: Author¹</p>
	 <p>Fig. 15; Mapping of the Seafront showing the Present Building Use and Activities. Source: Author¹ documentation</p>	 <p>Fig. 17: Garbage Disposal along the Warehouse Stretch and the Beach. Source: Author¹</p>  <p>Fig. 18: Unauthorized Habitats along the Warehouse Stretch and the Beach. Source: Author¹</p>  <p>Fig. 19: Deserted Beach along the Warehouse Stretch. Source: Author¹</p>

May, 2024



Conclusion

The study finds that the Kuttichira sea front which was once a pivotal gateway to the city's bustling life is now deteriorated as Calicut's neglected periphery. The abandoned industrial heritage of the area which are the remnants of a lost prosperous era, serve as reminders of the bustling commercial activities that once thrived in the area. With urbanization, the intrinsic value of the historic buildings along the sea front risks being overshadowed, perpetuating the gradual runoff of the area's rich cultural past. The present state of neglect is evident on the pressure of transformation on the abandoned warehouses, the human activities and the unauthorized developments along the sea front. Kuttichira is one relevant example among the numerous such industrial heritage sites in India, which back the statement by Loures (2008) who says that the assessment of industrial heritage is often limited to the visual values rather than any respect to its functional and historic value. The identified industrial heritage can be revitalized by promoting its own potential of intangibles such as the cuisine of Kuttichira derived from its industrial past. This can not only protect the industrial heritage of Kuttichira but also incorporate it into everyday life of the community, promoting a feeling of pride and belonging among them.

The scope of the study is limited to the coastal towns in South India because of its cultural relevance in history. A limitation of this study is the reliance on the data collected from the interactions with a field expert and local residents, since the literature on the area was not readily available in the limited time frame.

Recommendations

The study recommends that initiatives be taken by the state to extend tourism-related activities from the active Calicut beach, which is less than 1 km away from the study area, making the entire seafront a single public realm. This can connect the historic stretch with the current direction of city growth. This close proximity to the city's major public space offers an additional advantage, facilitating smooth redirection of tourist traffic to the southern stretch through well-defined planning proposals.

The government can revitalize warehouses by using adaptive reuse strategies to turn them

into economic drivers that can promote the culinary heritage of the community. By reusing these historical buildings, the community can boost the economy and maintain its cultural heritage. While the central government holds ownership of the abandoned beachfront land, offering great opportunity for urban development, the adjacent warehouse stretch, under diverse private ownerships of the Kuttichira community can benefit from the state's land pooling mechanisms, facilitating acquisition. This dichotomy can present a cultural landscape, where governmental and private interests can converge and foster potential for coordinated development efforts that could revitalize the area and restore its historical prominence within the cityscape.

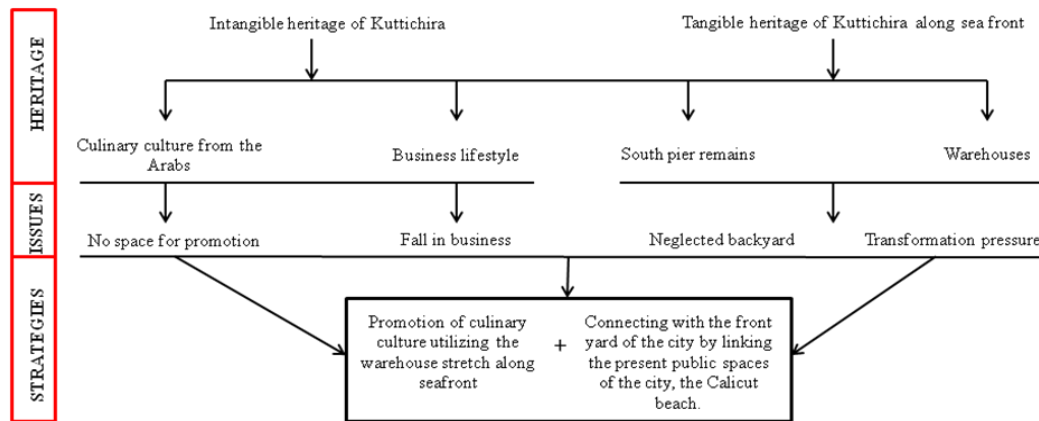


Fig. 22: Recommended Strategies for the Upliftment of the Industrial Heritage of Kuttichira
Source: Author¹

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