



Debrief Report

MY FORT KOCHI 'THANALKOOTTU'

28th May 2018

A Tactical Urbanism Process to
Create 'People Centric' Public Spaces

INTRODUCTION

WRI India in Collaboration with Kochi Municipal Corporation and Cochin Smart Cities Limited and is developing a Detailed Project Report as a part of heritage development of Fort Kochi area. The heritage master plan aims to create frame work for development of streets and public spaces, heritage (tangible and intangible). It also aims to adopt a 'people centric approach' through a series of stakeholder processes from documentation to proposal stage.

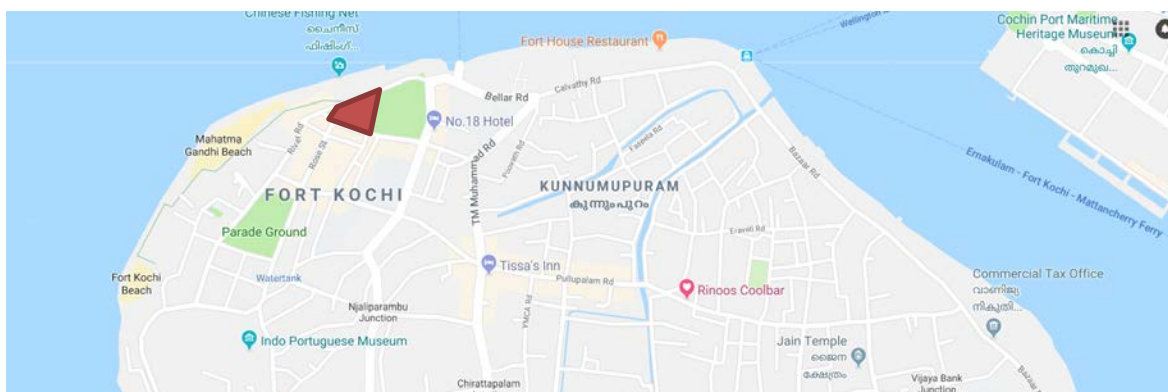
To kick start the DPR process WRI India in collaboration with KMEA school of Architecture organized 'My Fort Kochi - ThanalKoottu' on 28th May 2018 at Vasco da Gama square. This community led one-day event adopted a 'tactical urbanism process' of revitalizing the 'Vasco da Gama' square into a vibrant people oriented activity space. The intent of this event was to demonstrate the need for public spaces in the city and revitalizing them through contextual activities, suitable for all age groups and gender.

PRIOR PREPARATIONS

EXISTING SCENARIO

The public space identified for the project was Vasco da Gama square, a historical square to the north of Fort Kochi area, adjacent to the beach.

Map of Fort Kochi with chosen Public space – Vasco da Gama square



The square comprised of illegal parking and street vendors which paved way in losing the historic identity of the square. The scope of the project included replacing parking with innovative public spaces and activities, to transform the area into a vibrant patch of land.

Vasco da Gama square - existing scenario



The project was commenced with a meeting with Mayor Smt. Soumini Jain through identification of dates and list of stake holders required for the event. This was followed by a series of meetings with various stakeholder's groups like Clean Fort Kochi (CFF) foundation, local homestay associations, heritage groups, International Forum for Cultural Heritage and Tradition (IFCHAT), hotel owners, local RWA groups to receive inputs on managing and organizing the event. Ex-Mayor Mr. K J Sohan critical inputs about on ground challenges and opportunities provided understanding the dynamics of people and area. Director of CPPR (Centre for Public Policy Research) Dr.Dhanuraj along with their organization showed interest to support this public event understanding importance of projects of this kind. Meetings with the City Police Commissioner Shri. MP Dinesh IPS and Fort Kochi Circle Inspector Shri. Raj Kumar provided the necessary cooperation for the event. Lastly the media outreach in papers and radio also led to publicizing the event.

SITE PREPARATIONS

WRI India team along with students of KMEA College of Architecture initiated the work on site, a week prior to the event. This included understanding of the current activities, challenges and potential of the space. The background tasks also included scouting for materials for temporary furniture and installations, and preparation of collaterals – signage, display boards, information about different activities. WRI team also interacted with local communities (fishermen, vendors), experts, associations, enthusiasts and local groups to gain inputs for the event and request them to collaborate.

Use of recyclable materials from surroundings



Interaction with locals



THANALKOOTTU EVENT

The event was divided into two main categories - 'Build your Space' and 'Claim your Space'.

BUILD YOUR SPACE

The people of Fort Kochi form were welcomed to contribute in creating the public space. Here the local along with students of WRI team built the public spaces through temporary installations, furniture and planned activities.

Cleaning up the square



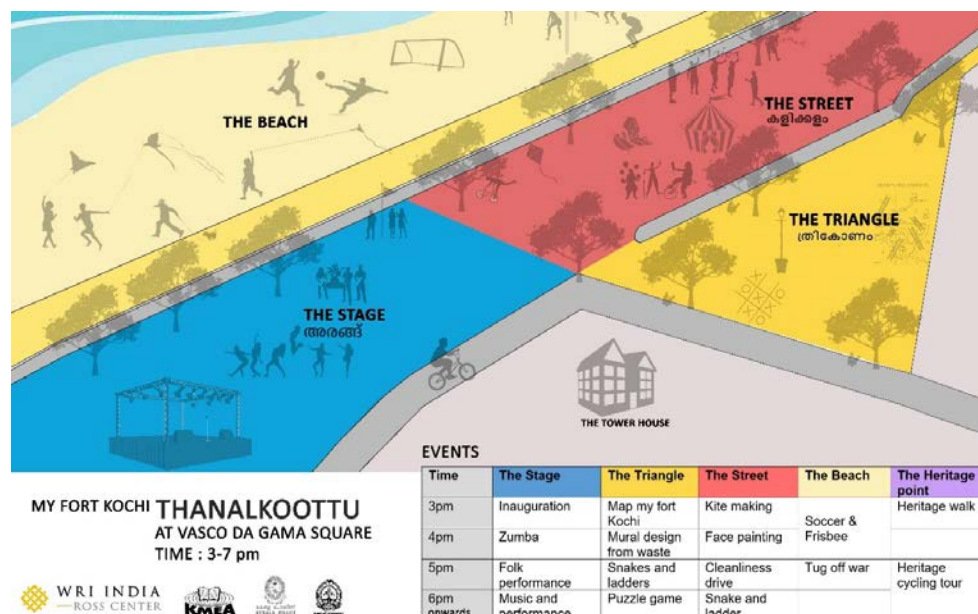
Building activities on site



CLAIM YOUR SPACE

The recreated public space was complimented with a series of activities like Heritage walking and cycling tours, Conversations with city representatives, interactive board activities about Fort Kochi, Treasure hunt, Games, Competitions, soccer and frisbee, performances and cleanliness drive. The area was divided into 4 zones – The stage, the triangle, the arena and beach. The activities were distributed accordingly.

Map showing zones and respective activities



The Thanalkoottu event kick started with locals and tourists of all age groups, participating in a range of activities organized across different zones in the Vasco da Gama square. While kids enjoyed the life-sized games like snake and ladder, puzzle etc; teenagers and adults participated in games like open table tennis, badminton, Frisbee and other sports activities organized by Decathlon. The installations served as interaction areas and memorable photo spots. Understanding the public need for walking, cycling and public spaces was a very critical part of documentation and this was achieved through interactive boards. A fun Rain Zumba demonstration by Fit Life Kochi added the component of active and healthy living to the event. Prominent residents of Fort Kochi including Smt. Shiny Mathew and MLA K J Maxi provided their inputs for interactive boards by identifying the significant walking and cycling routes, and the nature of public spaces required in Fort Kochi area.

Interactive activities and games for all age groups



MLA of Kochi K J Maxi, Standing Committee for Town Planning Chairperson Shiny Mathew and Standing Committee for works Chairman P M Harris made their presence and showed their support for the event. Shri. Maxi MLA spoke about the unique heritage value of Fort Kochi and the need to preserve it for our future generations. He pointed out that public spaces be given back to the public and the pressing need to bring back the lost glory of Fort Kochi. He also mentioned about the need for a community forum which would take up the cause of public spaces in the area.

MLA K J Maxi and Councilor participating the in the event



Smt. Shiny Mathew addressed the need to preserve public spaces in Fort Kochi and community engagement to play a critical role in achieve this. Shri. PM Harris chairman works committee pointed out that such events promote a sense of belonging to the space and promote community living. Mr. Rangadasaprabhu president Ernakulam District Residents Association Apex Council (EDRAAC) urged the public to take up the event and create environment friendly public spaces across all of Kochi.

PARKING CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

The major challenge was to replace illegal parking with usable public space. The steps taken to resolve by installing temporary barricades at the 3 main entrances to the square and providing designated pocket parking spaces outside the site.

Square before and during the event



MEDIA OUTREACH

The prior coordination with the newspaper agencies (Manorama, Indian Express, TOI and Hindu) as well as the radio led to an effective outreach, both pre- and post-event. The event hence was hugely appreciated by locals and experts of the city.

Media outreach links

Times of India - <https://bit.ly/2kR0ZU6>

The Indian Express - <https://bit.ly/2LoRpDf>

Manorama - <https://bit.ly/2sKGHl0>

Smart city - <https://bit.ly/2xHYZa2>

The Hindu - <https://bit.ly/2IgOSu0>



WAYFORWARD

The 'Thanalkoottu' project demonstrating a Tactical Urbanism process is the first step towards creation of Heritage DPR for Fort Kochi area.

The project has the potential to be scaled up in two ways

- Setting up a process to demonstrate Tactical Urbanism process in other public spaces in Fort Kochi and Ernakulam area
- Adopting the learnings from the Tactical Urbanism process and developing a permanent intervention for the public spaces.

The project also has led understanding the dynamics of the public spaces in Fort Kochi area which in turn will help in validating the DPR creation process. The event hence will be followed by a 'Fort Kochi Visioning Workshop' in 2nd week of June. The workshop will provide a platform to identify key issues and strengths of Fort Kochi area and hence derive strategies for heritage development, streets and public spaces for the historic core.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to sincerely thank to following people/organizations for making this event a success and we hope to seek your support in future

- Mayor Smt. Soumini Jain
- Ex. Mayor Shri. K J Sohan
- Shri. K J Maxi, MLA Kochi
- Shri. P M Harris, Standing Committee Works Chairman - Kochi Municipal Corporation (KMC)
- Mr. Rangadasa Prabhu, President, Ernakulam District Residents Association Apex Council (EDRAAC)
- Smt. Shiny Mathews, Councilor, Fort Kochi
- City Police Commissioner Shri. MP Dinesh IPS
- Fort Kochi Circle Inspector Shri. Raj Kumar and local police
- Dr. Rajan and Smt. Simmi of Cochin Heritage Environment and Development (CHED)
- Mr. David Lawrence of CFF (Clean Fort Kochi Foundation) and Team of CFF
- Dr. Dhanuraj and team of CPPR (Centre for Public Policy Research) and Kochi Public Transportation Day Team
- International Forum for Cultural Heritage and Tradition (IFCHAT)
- Hotel owners Association
- Local residents of Fort Kochi
- Media – Indian express, Times of India, The Hindu, Manorama
- Radio Mango
- Decathlon
- Fit life Kochi
- Students from KMEA College of Architecture

WRI INDIA TEAM

- Jaya Dindhaw, Strategy Head, Cities and Transport
- Rajeev Malagi, Senior Project Associate, Urban Development Program
- Aparna Vijaykumar, Project Associate, Transport Program
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- Anjali Gopi, Intern, Urban Development Program
- Abhinav Jaiswal, Intern, Urban Development Program