

## Student Thesis Competition (STC) Season 5 on “Re-imagining Urban Rivers”

### Methodology for assessing the Tourism Carrying Capacity of estuarine ecosystems : A Case of Kochi

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Course Discipline: Masters in City Planning

#### The Vembanad Wetland

Designated as a **Ramsar Site**, it is one of the largest wetland systems on the southwestern coast on India.

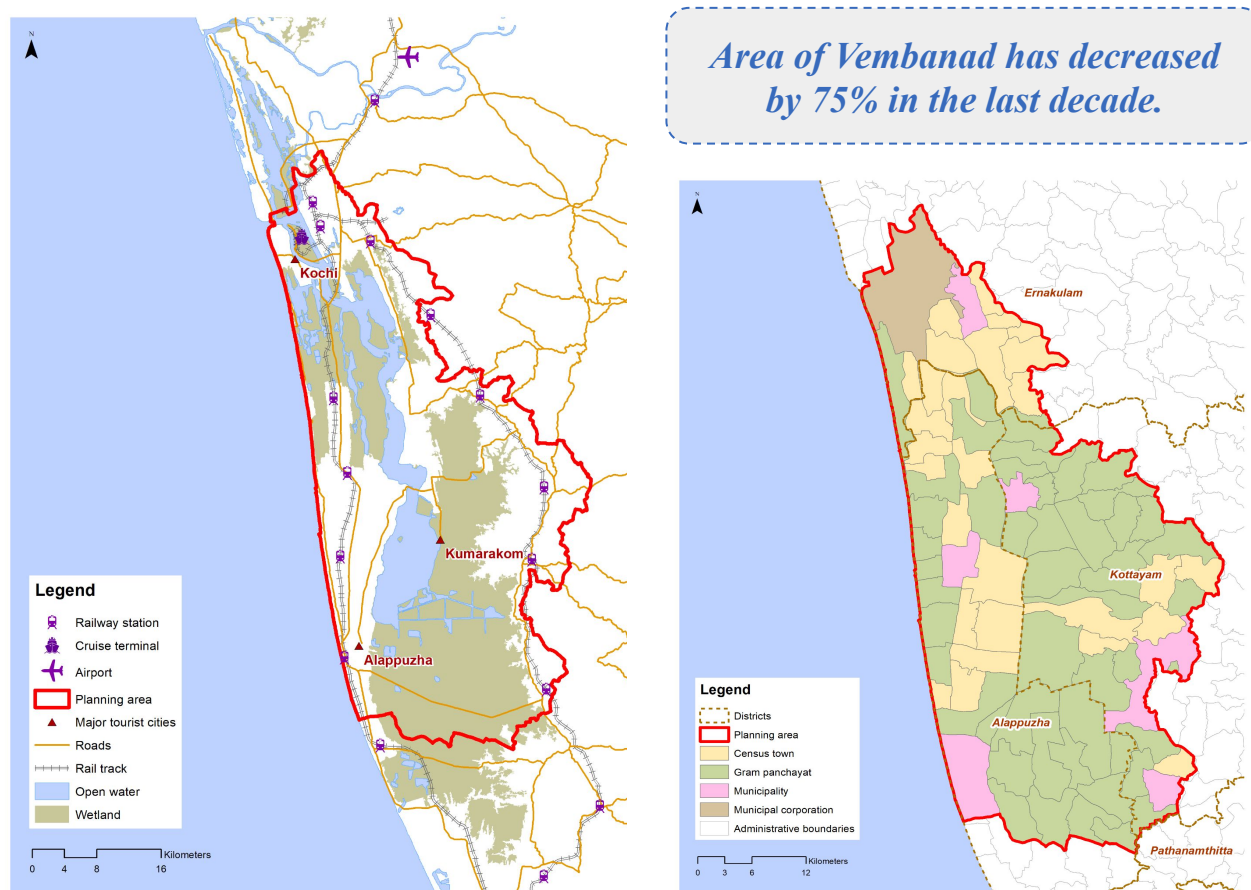


Figure : Study area delineation  
Source : Author

Figure : Study area jurisdictional boundaries  
Source : Author

#### Key issues and Resolution Strategy

Key Issue	Resolution Strategy
Dependence on water bodies, leading to ecological stress	Diversify tourism offerings by integrating land-based activities and regulating boat carrying capacities
Neglect of local communities in tourism narratives	Reorient focus towards the socio-economic and cultural fabric of wetland communities
Mass tourism with low environmental awareness	Promote niche tourism through awareness, education, and a wetland-sensitive brand identity

#### Current status of tourism

Tourism currently is restricted to the Vembanad Lake and its kayals with a carrying capacity of 368 boats. The current 800+ boats overburdens the vulnerable ecosystem.

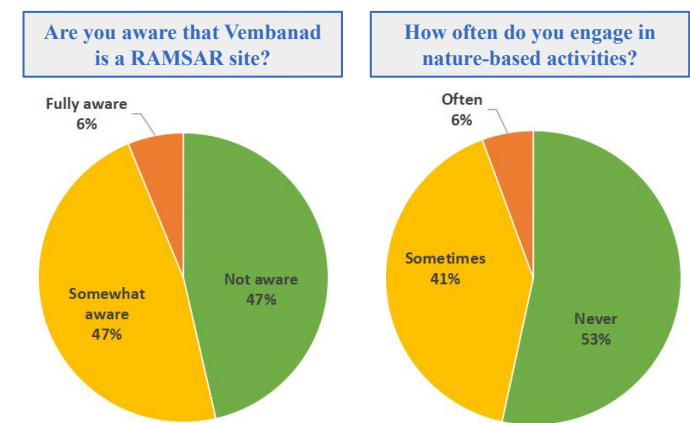
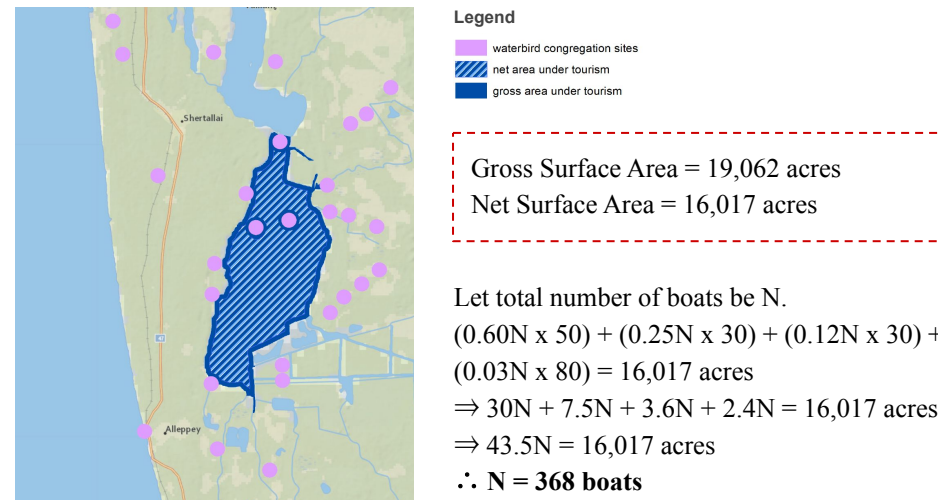


Figure : Ecological awareness assessment  
Source : Author, primary survey

#### Proposed nature of tourism

Instead of overburdening the water channels, the new form of tourism will also utilise the land resources and focus on the unique socio-economic fabric of the wetland.

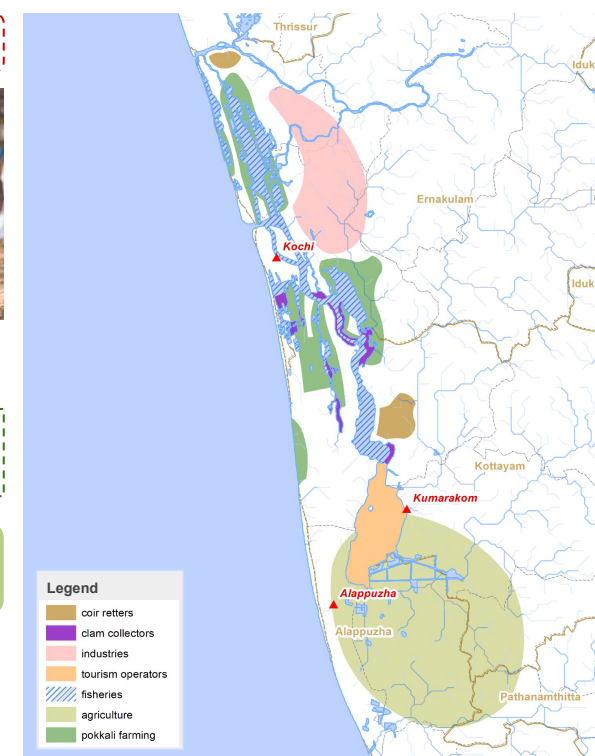
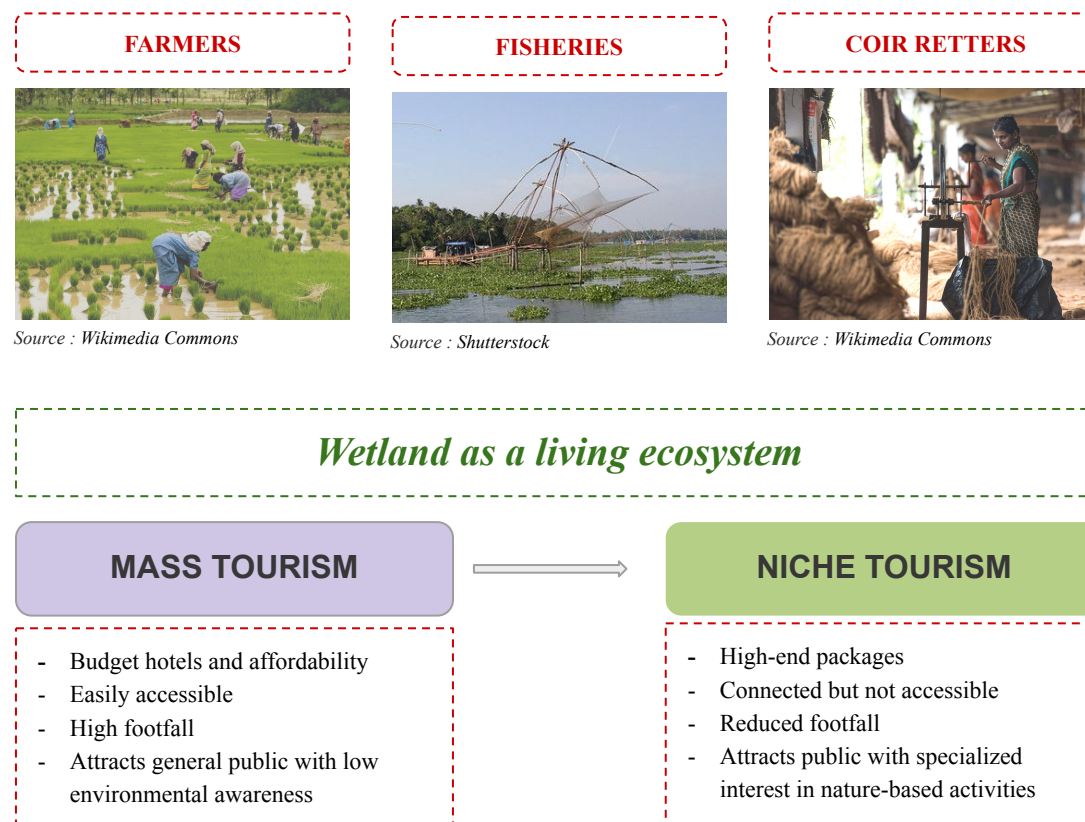


Figure : Major stakeholders of the Vembanad region  
Source : Author

#### Proposed tourism clusters

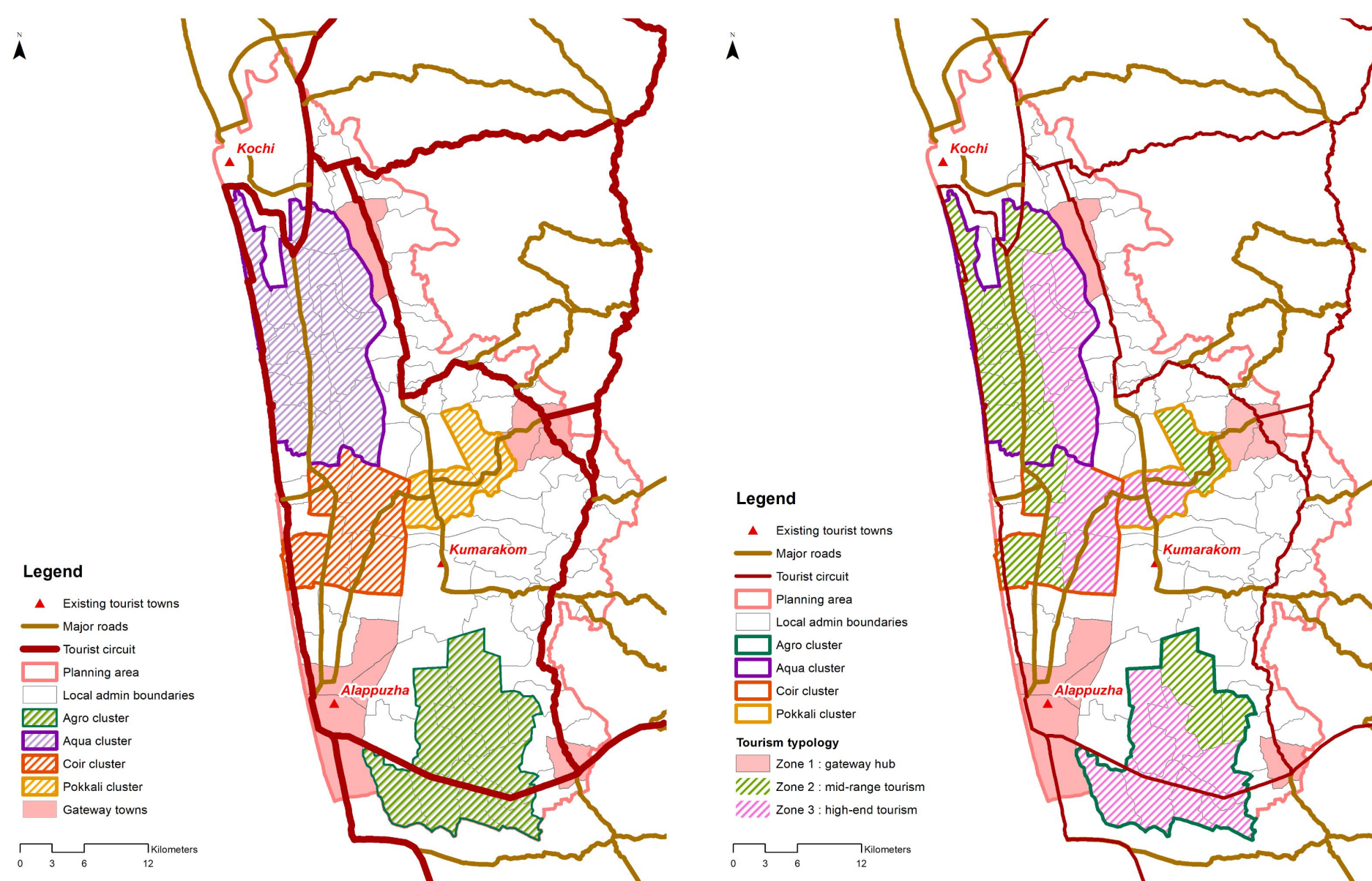


Figure : Study area delineation based on administrative boundaries  
Source : Author

Figure : Study area delineation based on road layout  
Source : Author

#### Tourism Carrying Capacity (TCC)

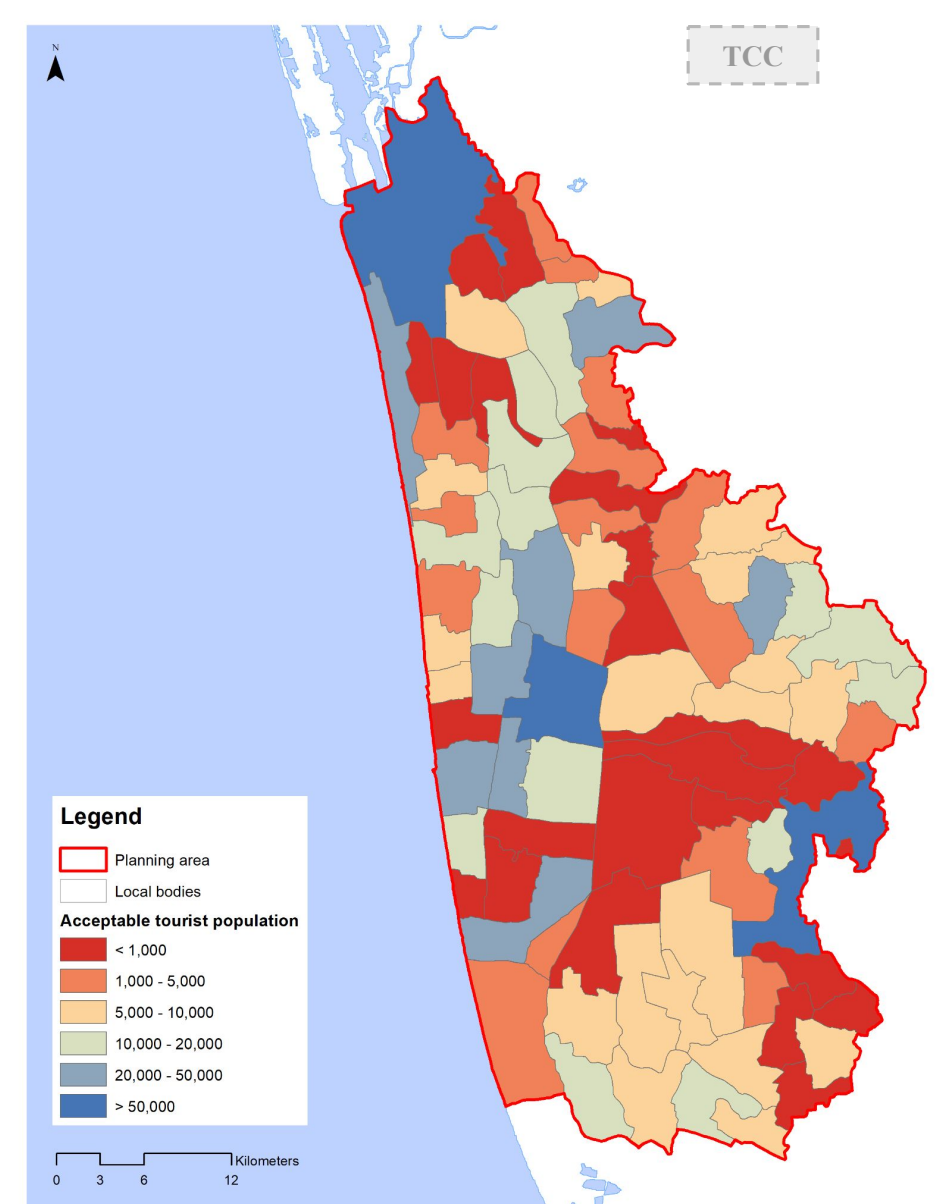


Figure : Tourism carrying capacity (2030)  
Source : Author