

Developing Suburbs as Independent Alternatives—A Study on Sathanuru, Kanakapura Taluk, Bengaluru, India

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Abstract

Any settlement in the vicinity of any city, be it a Capital or Metropolis, always tends to accommodate a sizeable population of the latter. Any research, specifically the social ones, always witnesses a hiatus between the city planners on the one hand and end users or the common people on the other hand, generally giving rise to a dilemma that is not so easy to unfold. Often, terms like gentrification and the surfacing of issues like ‘gated communities’ further complicate the process. As the urban communities move to the countryside for better accommodation, big and spacious ones, and a clean environment, the growth and development of the region will be pulled up, triggering businesses, trade, and transport potentialities. However, such benefits may lead to forced migration of the poorer residents towards further distances due to rapid displacement as opposed to nominal compensations. This paper aims to highlight such issues, where gentrification leads to the displacement of the local people, with Sathanuru situated in Kanakapura taluk in the south-western periphery of Bengaluru city as a case study.

Keywords: gated communities, metropolis, gentrification, suburbs, land use

Introduction

A hinterland, often termed Umland or tributary region (either rural or urban or both), is closely associated with a nearby town or a primate city. Chisolm G.G., for the first time, used the term Hinterland as the Hinder-Land to define the back-country of a port or coastal

settlement. Chisholm continued to use hinder-land in subsequent editions of his *Handbook*, but hinterland became popular. By the early 20th Century, a port's backcountry or tributary region was usually called its hinterland. Later, hinterlands were considered important ‘areas’ of extension for

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important urban activities. This was true for Asian Cities and, typically, Indian cities. One such example is Bengaluru city, situated in peninsular India, which happens to be the software capital of India, and it 'eases' the pressure of urban activities into its fringe areas.

Sathanuru is one such 'alternative' for the city, which is located in the fringe area and will be a major (planned) urban area. Gentrification is defined as the process of a city neighbourhood being transformed in an urban land from 'low' value to 'high' value. It is solely a process of urban development where rural land use is steadily transformed into urban character with the actual residents being 'marginalised' and new residents dominating as gated communities, as an obvious urban-renewal program. This has been followed by inflated home prices and displacement of the previous residents. This leads to quite an alteration of the overall demographic conditions of the 'new' residents over the 'old', adding to further disparities in income levels, race, and caste.

Additionally, the size of households steadily declines as the low-income families with bigger sizes are often replaced by younger 'rich' independent couples desiring to be closer to their job locations and regular activities near the urban core. What emerges noticeably is the emergence of already mentioned gated communities where the newer countryside residents prefer apartment living within defined

boundaries of securities and movements. Offices, retail stores, restaurants, and other leisure facilities steadily grow in the countryside, replacing rural land use. Finally, because of these changes, gentrification significantly affects an area's culture and character, making gentrification a controversial process. Re-orienting the growth of Bengaluru, the State government recently focused on developing the City's western and southern suburbs. Such activities resulted in the natural and obvious outcome of gentrification taking place silently in these areas.

Historical Background

The historians once remarked that the Indian part of the peninsula is vast and the empires and historical materials are 'many'. The *Deccan peninsula* witnessed a series of invasions and reigns of notable kings like the Chalukyas, Kalyanis, the Rashtrakutas and the Cholas, followed by the British at the conclusion. The land to the south of the *Vindhya* is curved out by the rugged terrain shelters Sathanuru, which once was a small settlement designated as the rural countryside of Karnataka. However, the Vindhyas that physiographically divide the Northern plains of India to the southern plateau of Deccan had witnessed no such period when these two physical units did not influence each other politically, culturally and, of course, socially. Ancient India saw the rise and fall of many kings and their dynasties in this plateau region, located halfway on the maritime

routes from the Mediterranean Sea via Africa to China, providing a brisk maritime trade with the nations on either side. With time, many kingdoms flourished not only in the northern plain but also in the southern peninsula region. This led to quite a varied culture to develop in the area. Only a few years back, a handweaving industrial unit was set up in Sathanuru hobli, situated in Kanakapura taluk of the southern state of India, solely to train the backward women in these areas. Such initiatives boasted the people of the region, and soon, the government took every opportunity to develop the place as one of many alternatives for decentralising the urban activities of Bengaluru and developing it as one of the leading centres in the handweaving industry. This would give general impetus to the backward region of Kanakapura for urbanisation, which would be sustainable and impactful for the weaker sections of the residing communities.

As a landscape phenomenon, the fringe areas generally vary geographically and temporally. A fringe area is continuous and hardly unrecognisable around several cities in regions like the Netherlands. However, intermingling and scattered components of land use are often abrupt and irregular in countries like the USA and France. London, however, shows a different picture with patches of green belts that are strongly trying to maintain the basic components of rural land use over urban activities (Pryor, 1968).

Literature Review

Regarding space and social space, it is always necessary to ensure well-being in living activities, including physical wellness, social wellness and neighbourhood support. The seventeen sustainable goals (numbered 11) target sustainable cities and communities. With growing urbanisation, cities globally face the challenges of accommodating the residents and growing demand for infrastructure. Asian countries, in particular, are going through immense self-contradicting methods of decentralisation and in-situ renewal processes, and they are hardly aware of the right solution. The cities globally are probably the chief areas of concern, which have to be kept 'running' for the sake of the economy and need to be

'checked' to expand further for the 'good' of our crop-producing communities worldwide. The most disturbing effect of land transformation is a matter of displacement, where the landowners are insufficiently compensated, and resettlement drives often fail due to the unwillingness of the landowners to completely new regions and separate social neighbourhoods (Danielle L., 2015). Such consequences bring chaos and people's non-reluctance to cooperate. A large amount of literature explicitly investigates how the urban-region is governed, but how much less attention was made to the queries of the activities in the suburbs, specifically the cross-lapping of public and private processes, the

actors, and institutions that determine the shape of planning, design, politics, economies of suburbs specially and everyday behaviours of the people (Ekers et al., 2012). The fact remains that cities rise and fall, but what is concerning is the fate of urban components likely to be controlled by capitalism and colonial influences (Roy & Aihwa, 2011). Contextually, there may be advanced ideologies to frame and operate the components of social and physical planning to understand better the dilemma of growing urban areas and receding rural boundaries achieving none (Scott, 2013). Indeed, the suburb's definition is contested (Wissink, 1962). These suburbs are often considered residential *frills* around the administrative divisions of urban areas. However, the suburbs also frequently lose their administrative divisions (via arrangement and rearrangement) to accommodate city growth geographically (Whitehand & Carr., 2001). The suburb has been considered the focus of much physical change during the twentieth century -firstly, in developing new forms of extensive low-density urban landscapes. Also, changes have been either at the small scale of personalisation or the intermediate scale of housebuilding in the back garden' (Whitehand & Larkham, 1991). In developed countries like the UK, the suburban landscape has been quite a subject of exclusive protection and management through thorough legal restrictions on plots, building forms,

styles of architecture and land use patterns.

Study Area

Sathanuru is an important part of Kanakapura Taluk of Ramanagara district of Karnataka state, located in the neighbourhood of Bengaluru. Kanakapura itself is quite noted for the production of silk rather than sericulture and rich granite deposits. Besides, the region produces silk, power looms, brick production, pottery industries and other agro-based industries. This proves that the taluk is quite dependent on agriculture as a major occupation, and apart from that, it has been reported that nearly forty villages practice bee-keeping where more than one hundred and fifty households are engaged in beekeeping activities, who maintain nearly three hundred bee colonies. Such activities are also encouraged by the state government. Agriculture is the main source of income for people. Kanakapura taluk or block covers an area of around one thousand and six hundred square kilometres consisting of six sub-regions or Hoblies (Fig.2), namely;

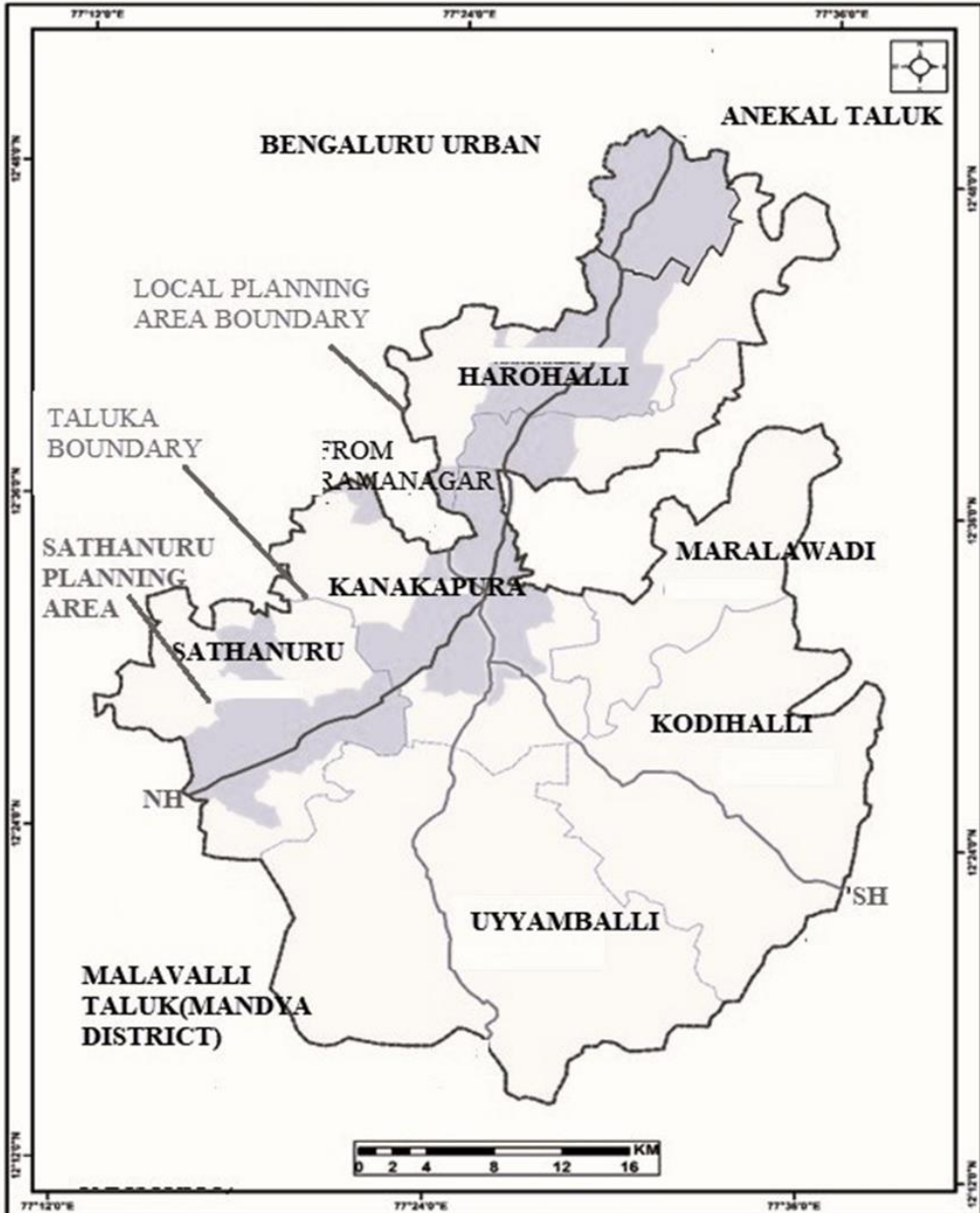
- a) Kasaba Kanakapura
- b) Harohalli
- c) Maralawadi
- d) Kodihalli
- e) Sathanuru
- f) Uyyamballi

The hobli named Sathanuru is often termed as a sleepy village as it is located in the rain-shadow area of Western Ghats of peninsular India with low rainfall and not so heavily populated region. The region

typically is a less developed part of Karnataka, though lately, the planning authorities had planned for its 'makeover' under the scheme of the local planning area of

Kanakapura and ten small villages and their adjoining areas under forest were selected for exclusive development with modern urban-inclined infrastructure facilities.

Figure 1
Kanakapura Hobli and its Six Hoblies



Source: Report: Kanakapura LPA (2019)

Sathanuru and the Scope of Development

As discussed earlier, Sathanuru has been considered quite an example of sustained urban land use, which would offer immense opportunities to generate job opportunities via silk industrial activities for the local people and establish newer infrastructure for those settling here. The place has been known for its potential in construction industries (for building materials like steel and cement and service activities). Now, this would solve two problems at once: firstly, moving away from the backward pockets of Kanakapura taluk may be lowered owing to the newer opportunities in their regions, and secondly, the region would also cater to the housing needs of the population shifting from Bengaluru to these places of the countryside. At the initial stages of planning, the region was considered to be developed as a new independent Township Area where modern amenities typically needed for urbanisation may be provided to attract investment and, of course, a population that may pull up the growth of the area and ease out the excessive population pressure of Bengaluru, being the software capital of India. However, due to certain issues and protests raised by the local people, the policy of making the Township project a reality was shelved. This was initially a setback, but later, in 2019, a Local Planning Area plan was formulated to cater to the need for overall development at a regional level. This is important as the township project, if realised, could trigger more imbalance and the least development at the socio-economic level.

Demography and Others...

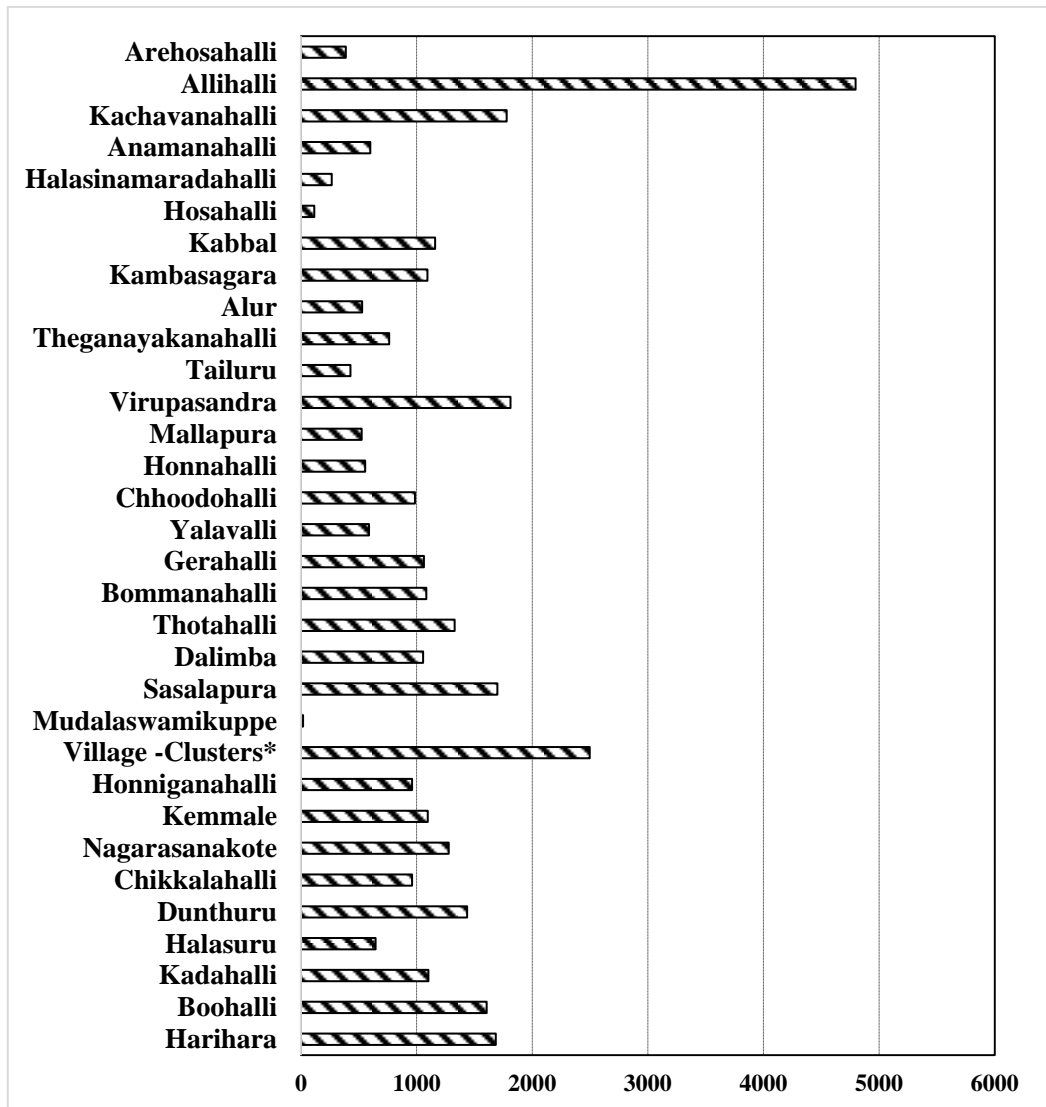
Sathanuru Hobli within Kanakapura Taluk encompasses nearly forty villages that will be brought under the Local Planning Area project with special emphasis on the Sathanuru hobli. The hobli is situated in the southwestern part of Kanakapura Taluk and has its maximum population concentrated in the Allihalli village and least Mudalawaswamikuppe village. The next village in order (in the concentration of population) is the village clusters composed of six villages (Deshohalli, Somanathapura, Naripura, Achalu and Yadagondanahalli and Naripura) with little or no population (Fig.2). Such cluster would provide greater scope for urban expansion and thoughtful provision of housing for the people who have settled here off Bengaluru. However, the village with a moderate to high population (skilled and unskilled labourers) would face the ultimate dilemma of identifying their 'places' in the social and geographical space. There is a possibility of a widening gap between the economic level of the rich outsiders and the poor insiders. Indeed, there are two forested areas, named Kabbalu and Tailuru, rich in natural resources like timber, which would be delimited aeri ally and would pose a challenge to the existence of people who rely upon timber collection, and related industries would be at stake. The average size of families residing originally in the Sathanuru villages was as large as five to six members, which would be readily and slowly displaced and occupied by the new urban population groups with white-collar jobs. Also, as far as the family size is concerned, the villages include

a large number of family members, say, a size of at least 5-6 members. However, when they get displaced, what would establish small and

nucleated families with few household members impact the demography quite distinctly?

Figure 2

Distribution of Villages in Sathanuru Hobli, Basis Population 2011 Census



*Includes Deshohalli, Somanathapura, Naripura, Achalu and Yadagondanahalli and Naripura

Source: Sathanuru Local Planning Area: Kanakapura Taluk, 2011: Census of India, 2011

Suggestions

Geographers view the process of gentrification seriously, and thus, a Local Planning Area has been planned to improve and develop the condition of Kanakapura taluk and exclusively Sathanuru with the sole aim of taming the opportunities of the Hobli in particular and the adjoining areas in the bigger perspective. Such a way would pave the way for the realisation of the major target of developing the suburbs of Bengaluru City as an alternative to reducing its population pressure and, more importantly, sustainably. Urban planners and many others argued that the suburbs are thus planned to improve and attract new residents. Kanakapura taluk has rich sources of minerals, specifically granite quarrying. However, this may also threaten these regions' environment and growing urban population. Such measures included;

- Rainwater (that accumulates in the quarrying region) may be stored and drained with guided cleaning processes in between to water the agricultural fields in the neighbourhood
- The planners who are more concerned with the environmental perspectives have already suggested garland draining of the rainwater towards dry fields for better groundwater recharge
- In fact, the region brought under the plans of developing it suitable for urbanisation and in-situ

upgradation has also been taken into consideration for developing a green belt that not only would add to the aesthetic value of the region but also keep the promise of seeking environmental balance.

- However, there are issues as far as the underlain rock bed is concerned for rigorous plantations, but the planners argue for major afforestation measures wherever possible as the forested regions of Sathanuru are somehow affected by the previous attempts of unthoughtful urbanisation
- The drive towards sustainable urbanisation would also take into account the reduction of noise pollution and emission of pollutants or the combination of any degradation process in order to make Sathanuru an example of sustainable urban land use with mixed urban components, green pastures sheltering quite a great species of singing (or chirping) birds

Past literature reveals that there has always been quite a bone of contention between the very existence of suburbs and old small towns (or medium-sized) as an ideological urban residential alternative. Both concepts have been mentioned repetitively in various contexts, and thus, country-sides have admirers and strong critics (Alizadeh, 2012). To some, these are distinctive features of the contemporary urban landscape with an immense scope of change

(modifications) through human interventions. Contrary to this, some experts believe that suburbs attract chaos that includes all kinds of worst features of rural and urban living. Thus, any kind of planning around Bengaluru city should be sustainable and balanced as far as urban planning is concerned. If the urban boundaries of Bengaluru Metropolitan Region revise and rearrange itself with the expanding zone of its influence, it should not bring the cries of the rural people who were originally settling in the countryside with much ownership feels. It is useless if the planning becomes lop-sided towards the rich and completely denies the existence of the farmers. The resettlement or compensational drive for their 'damage' should not be the necessary outcome. Rather, in-situ arrangements for the landowners should be the top priority for the government.

Conclusion

Particularly in Asian countries, gentrification is most likely to occur if urbanisation occurs. Recent researches, however, talk about striking a harmony and a balance, to be precise, where the change of land use (from rural to urban) is more gradual than abrupt to provide a scope for adjustment. Such a statement may be further clarified by reducing growing disparities between the rich who opt for the countryside and the poor who originally belonged there. There is perhaps no means of forming a reliable and quantifiable data table for the 'loss' that the

indigenous farmers are incurring with the change of land use owing much to the impact of land-pooling policies by the government). However, the visible (negative) impact may be reduced by promoting employment (alternative) opportunities, education, training, and skill enhancement programmes to cater to the needs of the residents of Sathanuru. This way, there

may be quite a scope to improve the condition of such disparities. In India, it is indeed true that quite a majority of the population lived in villages, and agriculture was their major occupation. Thus, great prestige has been attached to such land ownership (even for a small parcel of land) that they could call their own. Moreover, this cannot be overlooked.

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