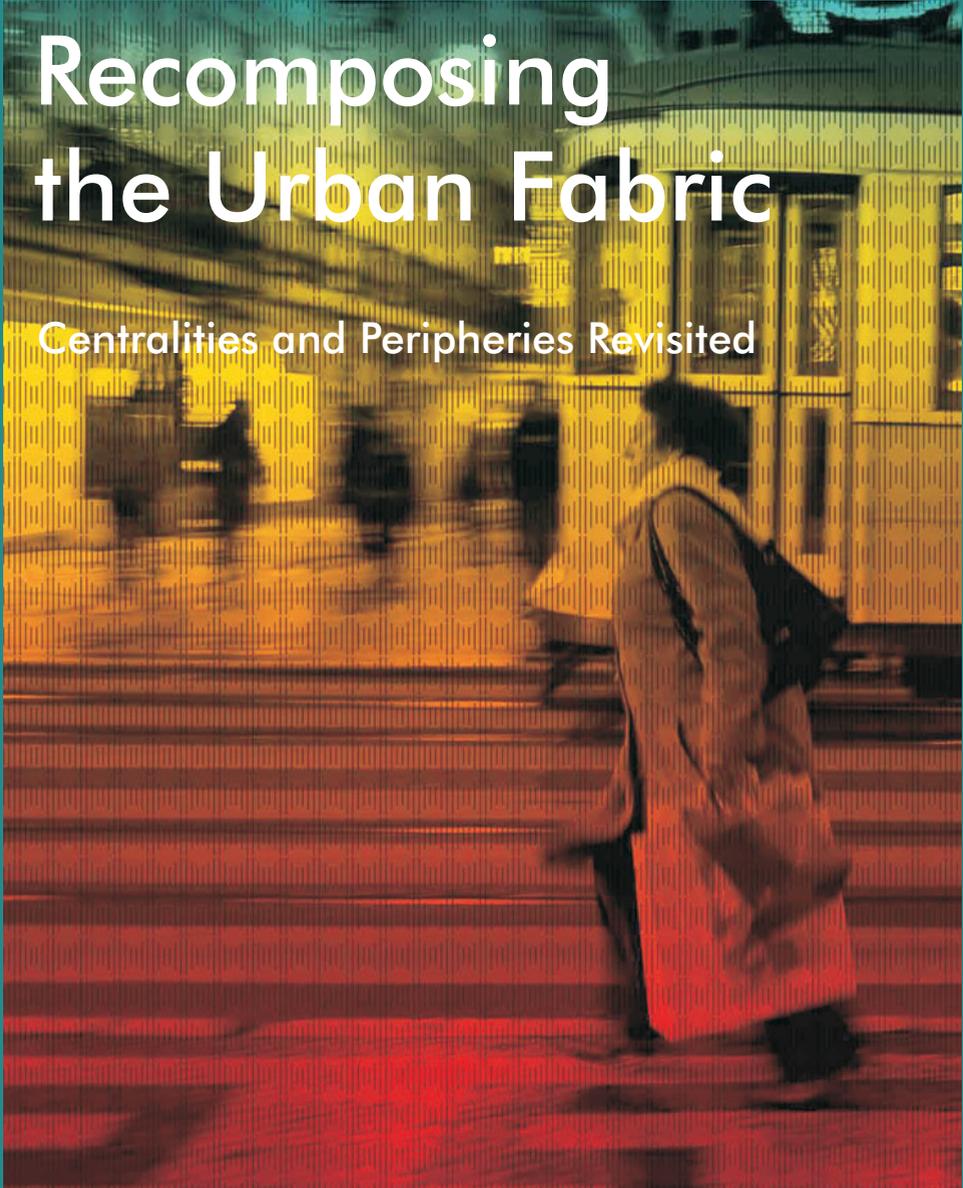


João Pedro S. Nunes e Pedro Costa
(editors)

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Recomposing the Urban Fabric

Centralities and Peripheries Revisited



João Pedro S. Nunes e Pedro Costa (eds.)

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Urbanism in Gurgaon

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Abstract

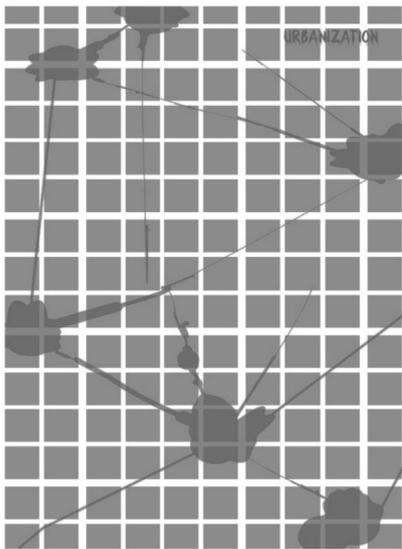
The paper talks about the urban interfaces in the post-millennial city of Gurgaon. It observes the phenomenon of Deterritorialization in Gurgaon by defining the users or the residents in the city based on their ethnicity, financial capacity, purchasing power, media exposure and mobility in the city. It looks into the space-time matrix to define user categories, to identify the interfaces which are often seen but never acknowledged.

Introduction

The work here is going to be elaborated on the interface(s), sometimes the boundaries, between different individuals and groups living in the most developing metropolitans of the Indian Democracy, Gurgaon. It is a city adjacent to the national capital New Delhi, around 37 km., which has emerged from an image of a satellite city to a city with the newest Municipal Corporation in India. 'Gurugram' as it is known to most of the believers in the Hindu mythology, was a Muslim pilgrimage between the capital Delhi and the shrine Ajmer.

On one hand, Gurgaon epitomizes the popular perception of 'hi-technology', 'development' and 'way of living', but on the other, unplanned and unchecked growth, insufficient infrastructure facilities, mindless encroachments to nature, ceaseless loss of agricultural land may sum up the present development trends here.[Biswas, 2006]

Biswas also says that "Gurgaon urbanism remains as an ad hoc arrangement of disjointed conclave."The paper starts from this thought that in a city like Gurgaon, with social and economic differences, there is an absence of



**The Pattern of
Urbanisation on a settlement**

Figure 11.1 The Pattern of Urbanisation on a settlement

interactions within its users. There is absence of *true public places* where interaction of different classes can occur, to lead to a true democratic and equal society, which India claims to through its constitution. Nevertheless, the individuals from different classes interact at different instances, the research started with a belief or hypothesis that “*there can be a public interface which can act after identifying different user-groups and appropriate functions.*”

The foundation of the arguments here are deeply inspired from the works of modern thinker, Arjun Appadurai. His commentaries over modernization, migration and globalization, which can be realistically, visualized in a city like Gurgaon, which is fighting a battle between its own razed but hidden embedded tradition, a conflict of a present physicality versus a common past. According to Appadurai, Deterritorialization is one of the central forces of the modern world. It brings populations into the lower class sectors and spaces of relatively wealthy societies, while societies creating exaggerated and intensified sense of criticism or attachment to politics in home state. Deterritorialization, primarily a concept given by Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, in their work *Anti Opedius*, in a minimal sense is the re-appropriation of the established relationships and beliefs with a new territory. The ‘territory’ here is spatial as well as temporal. It is also continuously taking references from the earlier established norms.

If we look at the users or the residents of Gurgaon, most of them are deterritorialized from their native space. They attempt to create new 'imageries' in the 'new' space. The paper investigates the urban 'imageries' in the newly emerging global towns and proposes new dimensions to observe the IT enabled post-modern culture. This phenomenon of Deterritorialization seems very true when a city like Gurgaon has begun to shape itself.

Deterritorialization and Gurgaon

The city of Gurgaon can be seen as a part of the above discussed phenomenon of deterritorialization, where various social classes have migrated from various territories and painted this blank canvas with their imagery. Every single migrant has created his micro-environment under the macro-environment of Gurgaon. This macro-environment has only been able to survive due to the presence of a macro-culture of this new city. This macro-culture can be understood as a regional-cosmopolitan in a sense as it absorbs people and cultures from various parts of the country. Not just formal citizens who officially bought the properties in the rich enclaves, but people from neighbouring countries too, with weak borders have infiltrated and settled in this city and have started acting as the city-dwellers performing within the rules and regulations of the city.

The macro-culture of the city is superficially inspired by the development of South-east Asian cities like Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. It propagates a 'consumption' culture through which it boldly invites the population around to participate in a consumption process. Then, it is succeeded by a process of commodification, where various cultures and resources are commercialized. If we look back at the political history of Gurgaon, this commodification was a result of 'open door' policy of the state government to compete with the developments in the adjacent National Capital Region. The urban pressures, like densification on the capital region, have made this city to commodify through newer means/tools of development. The value of this commodification depends on its 'alien' or say the 'Western/Modern' content.

The consumption culture when mixed with individual local and migrated imageries creates an absolutely new breed of culture. Be it the Bangla dwellers of Chakkarpur or the Tamil Techies working in an IT company, when they paint their imagery over an existing settlement, a new type of architecture is evolved. If we look at the minute pattern of this imagery, one can easily distinguish its influence on architecture and lifestyle. Evidently, this proves that architecture of the city is not untouched by this macro-culture too.

Categorizing the user groups

The idea of Formal and Informal, rich and poor, has always emphasized on a dichotomy and separation. It also leads to a dogmatic perception of the society. Alienating views in two poles may not present a clear picture. The subjectivity has also to be brought in. Looking things in temporal and spatial dimensions can bring in more clarity in the perspective. Hence, in this research, the general perspective of looking things in Black and White like on a pattern of ownership is disposed for the time being, and a new perspective of looking things in space-time matrix is employed. If not ten, a permutation allows/defines three categories, which becomes the three classes of the user or 'stakeholder' in the region:

i. Dynamic with space, Dynamic with Time:

This category is the people who are dynamic with space and dynamic with time. This category is deterritorialized from its original space and after their arrival in a new space, there is an attempt of resettling (reterritorializing) the memories. Through the course, they try to recreate the original/native space by first capturing its nature and later the essence. In a post-millennial context like Gurgaon they are using materials from the dynamic age of production. These materials or the media they are exposed to, contribute to the evolution or modernizing their originally practiced rituals/traditions. Therefore, they are dynamic with time too as they accept an assimilation and are adaptive in nature. They are forward looking people and are not hesitant to accept a 'change'. They live in a state of temporariness with time, and space as well and seek permanence in change.

Example: The population based in Gurgaon and working in its Multi National Companies (MNCs) or Business Process Outsourcing Offices (BPOs) but are not originally from this city, can be classified as constituents of this category. They are progressive with time and space. They have adapted to the city conditions and have contributed in its making. But, given an opportunity, they are willing to change their job and can leave the city. Different ethnicities within this category include the technologically educated people from various parts of India, who are working in/for IT companies and BPOs.

There is another set of people who see Gurgaon as their 'new' home and have joined the city to be associated for its 'branded' development. This set of people is from the adjacent national capital. The people who have found a new job in the city or have retired after spending their working life. There is also a set, who came back after spending their life in foreign countries expecting the city to offer them a balance between the original sense of 'home' and the left behind modern 'living'. Through the time, they adjust to the city's actuality.

ii. Dynamic with Space, Static with time

The people in this category are highly influenced by the memories and association they carry from their native base. The difference between the first category and this class is their capability of changing with time. This capability is manufactured by resources, opportunities, power and finance. Ironically, this capability is overpowered by the associations and memories they carry with themselves. As, this new space is unable to offer them an association as the previous one. They live in a state of temporariness with space. After being overpowered by the nostalgia, they become static and restrict themselves to change with time.

Example: The Bangladeshi slum dwellers of different urban villages in Gurgaon who came to the city for the new opportunities. Today, most of them are working as domestic workers and Rickshaw wallahs (Rickshaw Pullers). They consider this job better than sitting idle and unemployed back at home. They are able to earn for their settled lifestyle in illegal colonies planted by 'baahuballies' or the influential and economically dominating people of the

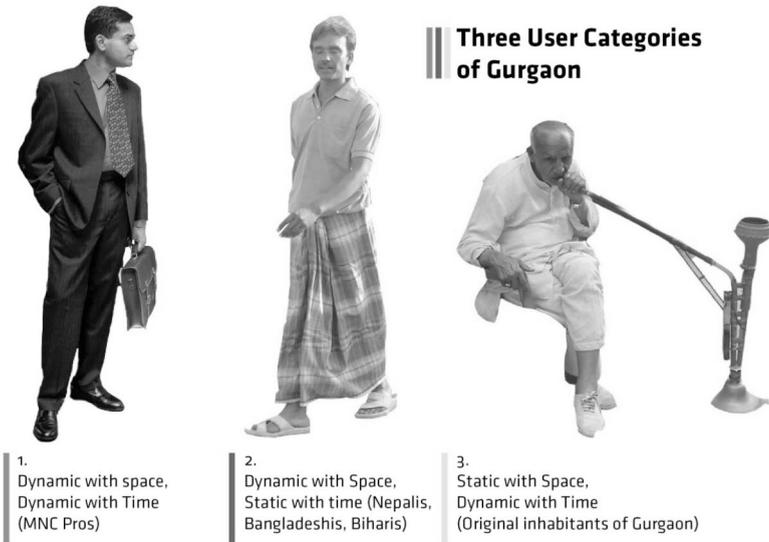


Figure 11.2 The Pattern of Urbanisation on a settlement

urban-villages from the city. This category is not contributing to the city's development formally, but they contribute in creating a balance by cutting down the cost of living index acting as affordable service providers and cheap human resource. The same story is with *Chhattisgarhi* migrants who are working here as construction workers, and give services to the building construction process through their manpower at nominal prices. Also, the Nepalese immigrants which are often seen working at different *tandoori* restaurants provide an unlimited man-supply to the retail food and catering industry.

iii. Static with Space, Dynamic with Time

The people belonging to this classification were not influenced by the phenomenon of Deterritorialization as they were never dislocated spatially. The only dislocation within them or that they have seen, is the change of time. The whole character of this category is changed by an increase/decrease in a capability like money, local political power etc. A sudden change in availability of opportunities can change this capability. The whole progress is governed by the progress in time and the innovations/opportunity with the development.

Example: The original inhabitants of Gurgaon's villages like *Chakkarpur*, *Wazirabad*, *Ghaata*, *Jharsa* etc. have taken the urbanization and real estate development as a boon for their economic conditions. Though, the social and cultural benefits are still in question as an abrupt change can be seen in their social-evolution.

The above three categories are later implemented in the following Appadurai's concepts.

Appadurai's 'scapes' interpreted for the context

In his work, *Modernity at Large*, Appadurai proposes a framework to explore disjuncture in a postmodern (postmillennial in the Indian context) city like Gurgaon. The author has interpreted these relationships to define the character of the users in the city of Gurgaon. These relationships, the capacities or the characteristics are:

- a. **Ethnoscape:** The landscape of people who constitute the shifting world in which we live. The background of users, i.e., the ethnicity and the occupation of the population living in the city.
- b. **Technoscape:** The technological capacity or the skills for the changing world which is generally uneven. Like, India exports the chauffeurs to the Middle East with Software Engineers to USA.

- c. Mediascapes: Distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information, i.e. an access to the modes of information, like internet, print or any other media form.
- d. Ideoscape: Ideologies of the society including political, spiritual and notional. It is composed of chain of ideas, terms and images, including freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, representation and democracy, which can be seen as a medium to know each other.
- e. Finanscape: The efficiency of income and expenditure. Moving currency, trade, onlinezation of currency and expenditure on consumer goods are the technological catalysts which have made this 'landscape' critical.

One more landscape can be seen, specifically for the context of Gurgaon, one more 'scape' can be introduced, f. Kinetiscape. It is the capability of a person or a group to move within a defined domain, here Gurgaon city. The options available to physically move within a city, like a motor or a rickshaw. It is also the quality of navigation including the footpath or the road. This particular capacity aspect is to examine the accessibility issues within a human construct know as city.

Exploring the Interfaces in the city

One man's imagined community is another's political prison.
(Anderson 1983)

Most of the planners in today's context propose what is needed by looking in a larger context, but never ask the real user for a critique. In the context of Gurgaon, a particular plot is given a land-use and a developer is asked to develop the land. Developer utilizes this 'opportunity' which is hidden in land-use and takes it to the extreme where he can get a maximum profit. This extreme is guided by materialistic intents and short-term / near-sighted visions, without considering the potential accessible use and users of the site.

As this particular site is accessible to different groups of stakeholders, the functions can be devised to maximize the efficiency of the site in terms of its accessibility to the 'real' stakeholders. It is important to identify the function/functions, and then decide the program. Therefore, the program is devised here after identifying the users.

Here is an attempt to address the 'scape' wise need of the three user categories of Gurgaon. The functions also act as possible interface with each other.

Table 11.1

Three User Categories vs. Appadurai's Scapes	1 Dynamic with space, Dynamic with Time (MNC Pros)	2 Dynamic with Space, Static with time (Nepalis, Bangladeshis, Biharis)	3 Static with Space, Dynamic with Time (Original inhabitants of Chakkarpur)
Ethnoscape	The population working in organized sector. They are immigrants from adjacent areas of Delhi or the IT/BPO employees from other states.	The un-organized population serving to organized sector. They are immigrants from comparatively backward states in search of better income opportunities.	The population, which is living in the region for a long time. They are the witnesses of urbanization and transformation of Gurgaon.
Design Input	Creating a space which has highly defined their character. Hence, a BPO.	Giving them an equal opportunity, which they can manage. The 'Phad / the labourer-mason pick-up spot'.	This class seen here is a mediator between the city and the 'newcomers'. A property dealer's office.
Technoscape	Comparatively high, they are ready to pay for quick services.	Low, economically dependent on the category.	High, the high prices of their assets were realized during the recent property boom.
Design Input	Hypermarket.	Scrap Metal Shop.	Bank.
Mediascape	Extremely High Mobile phones, internet, print.	Low Communal Space, Mobile phone.	Medium Communal Space, Mobile Phones and Print media.
Design Input	Internet Café.	Vocational institute.	Chaupal (a traditional Indian meeting and discussion place in villages).
Ideoscape	Glossy Modern, they are exposed to westernization with maximum mediums.	Bricologic Progressive, Nostalgic about their roots.	Raw Have created their own vocabulary of modernization, with some traditional inputs.
Design Input	Cinema theatre, performing areas like in a cultural center.	Video Cinemas.	Seasonal social spaces like a Ramlila Ground.
Finanscape	Quiet active, high onlinezation.	Living in Gurgaon make them spend each of their pennies.	They are spending to coup with modernity.
Design Input	Fast food restaurants.	A sabzi mandi (vegetable market).	A theka (liquor shop).
Kinetiscape	With a high Technoscape they have a high Capability with means of transportation like cars.	Low, absence of public transports worsens their condition.	Most of the informal means of transport are owned by this category. They include city-buses and 3-wheelers.
Design Input	Space for their capabilities, a Parking.	The Rickshaw Stand.	Bus Stand.



Figure 11.3 The Pattern of Urbanisation on a settlement

Elaborating the possible interfaces

The functions discussed in the above table are elaborated to explain their role in acting as interfaces.

a. Ethnoscape

1. BPO: The BPO has become Gurgaon’s image to the world. BPO was the function which made Gurgaon’s buildings different from the others. The architecture which a BPO demanded was interpreted by various architects, and most of them resulted in creating a ‘type’ for its function. Eventually, a ‘Closed Glass-Box’ has become a BPO’s type and its image also.

2. Adda (Phad): The large numbers of inhabitants of the category 2 are involved in construction work and areas near the site, Chakkarpur, houses them its logical to respond to the derived ethnoscape of this category.
3. Property Dealer Office: Selling off properties has been taken as a major occupation by the original natives of Gurgaon. This phenomenon can be traced back to the time when the Private Developers collaborated with these natives to create a real-estate market in Gurgaon. The local social knowledge and a familiarity to the working system made them perfect 'mediators / introducers' between.

b. Technoscape

1. Super Market: This phenomenon is one of the faces of the post-millennial India. Borrowing the idea of supermarkets from the West, this idea is a success in India. The quick service and a range of options available at one spot make it efficient, which the technoscape of user category 1 openly encourage.
2. Scrap metal / Kabaadi shop: Interestingly, in recent times, a number of Scrap Metal Shops have erupted in the city due to the consumerist attitude of the category 1. These shops are managed by people from the user category 2. This is also a sustainable manifestation which gives an option to recycle waste products.
3. Bank: There has been an occupational change after the DLFisation (Urbanization by the DLF group) of Gurgaon. The presence of a bank can always make people aware of the source through which they can consult for the new jobs. Moreover, a bank can always help in increasing the technoscape of population.

c. Mediascape

1. Internet Café: The social networks have been created within the virtual space. The internet café provides an opportunity to the populace to interact and share.
2. Vocational Institute: Despite being a large scale construction site, there is no formal training institute for the construction workers in the city. There has been no centralization or any organization assistance. A vocational centre with various training / skill-improving programs can add to their value.
3. Chaupal: Incorporating a 'Chaupal' comes under the idea of recreating the traditional medium of interaction and communication. The Category 3 is well aware of this function.

d. Ideoscape

1. **Performing Area:** There has been a limited exposure of Cultural ideas in terms of events in the city. The public functions of the city lack in showcasing the cultural dimensions of the users. The mediascape suggests a scope of providing a cultural platform for the people which can be translated as a performing area for the people. It should be able to respond to the various user age groups.
2. **Video Cinema:** The small scale 'Video Cinemas' can be seen as a response to the growing multiplexes in the city in quest of being 'entertained'. This phenomenon has evolved over the years to small size 'Video Cinema Theatres', with the limited resource and technical knowledge.
3. **Ramlila Ground:** Though, the category 3 has modernized and is still desperately trying to modernize, the people are still following the customs and events they have been following over the years. Providing a space for Ramlila (Mythological Indian Drama) can always respond to associations and cultural context of the user.

e. Finanscape

1. **Fast-food restaurants:** The lifestyle of this category suggests that they are equipped with a high disposable income. One of the important expenditure is done over the fast food restaurants specifically.
2. **Sabzi mandi:** This function (Vegetable Market) is primarily governed by people of this category in the area. It can prove as an interaction medium for each category.
3. **Theka:** Liquor is an inevitable truth of the category 3, though it is thoroughly enjoyed by all categories in Gurgaon. This space is also public in specific time of the day.

f. Kinetiscape

1. **Parking:** The absence of any formal transport system has compelled this category to equip their Kinetiscape with motor cars. Within a small period of 5 Years Gurgaon has started feeling a tough situation of parking the cars in any public and residential spaces. The parking facilities for any public function prove inadequate and create problems at a larger level of influence.
2. **Rickshaw Stand:** A huge chunk of male population is involved in rickshaw-riding in city. They are surviving due to absence of any formal transport system. Moreover, Rickshaws can always be used for covering smaller distances.
3. **Bus Stand:** Incorporating a Bus Stand is a part of the larger idea 'Gurgaon with a Public Transport System'.

Conclusion

Gurgaon can be seen as a *Sarai*, for its deterritorialized population of Gurgaon. The Population which has migrated and trying to find permanence in this dynamic city, can again migrate if given an opportunity. This only permanence (read consistency) can actually be seen as a part of consumption culture where one uses an object, without being associated with it. Gurgaon has not been able to give that association, as it was and is still projected as a foreign city in India. This foreign city is actually an alien city, where its deterritorialized mass is not able to find permanence, due to its unknown and inconsistent contents. Those who are associated are actually seeing it as a change or a new style of living.

The new urbanism of Gurgaon pretends to be a planned development, but it is not, rather it is majorly informal, spontaneous and reactive. The major hindrance is the three categories of the people and their lack in interactions. The derived interfaces, if considered and elaborated, by formal planning agencies, can become a catalyst for a sustainable evolution of the city.

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Glossary

- BPO:** Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) is the leveraging of technology or specialist process vendors to provide and manage an organization's critical and/or non-critical enterprise processes and applications.
- BPO Dhaba:** The food joints or the dhabas, next to a BPO, known through the name of the BPO.
- Dedensification:** the term was used in context of Paris, by John R. Logan and Todd Swanstrom in their essay, *Urban Restructuring: A Critical View, from Cities and Societies*, Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- Dehlavies:** Residents of the Indian Capital City of Delhi.
- Dhabas:** Local restaurants in India.
- Glass boxes:** Glass clad buildings of Gurgaon City, representing the Globalization and Consumerism.
- Informal Sector:** The word has several definitions, but the simplest of them is following. The informal sector refers to the part of the economy that does not fall under the purview of organized economic activities.
- Kerala Auto Rickshaw:** The low space high-capacity informal Auto Rickshaws which acts as feeder to the scanty bus route spine. They cover smaller distances say 5-10 km. and charge nominal fare.
- Kothis:** High end plotted Houses.
- Phad:** The place where labourers and mason involved in the construction industry collect and then hired for the day.
- Theka:** The liquor shop (may) with a Drinking place.