

The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality: Uncovering the Hidden Economy and Society

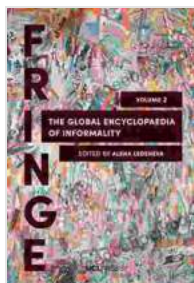
The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality is a groundbreaking and comprehensive resource that provides a deep dive into the informal sector, a vast and often overlooked aspect of the global economy and society. Edited by renowned scholars Alejandro Portes and Katherine Bellotti, this encyclopaedia offers a multidisciplinary perspective on informality, encompassing its various forms, causes, and consequences across different regions and sectors.

The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality defines informality as "economic activities that are not regulated or protected by the state, and that are often unrecorded or hidden from official statistics." This broad definition encompasses a wide range of activities, including:

- **Informal work:** Work that is not protected by formal labour regulations, such as minimum wage laws or social security benefits.
- **Informal businesses:** Businesses that operate outside of the formal legal and regulatory framework, often without licenses or permits.
- **Informal markets:** Markets where goods and services are exchanged without government oversight or taxation.
- **Informal settlements:** Housing arrangements that are not recognized or regulated by the state, often lacking basic infrastructure and services.

- **Informal networks:** Social and economic networks that operate outside of formal institutions, providing support and resources to individuals and communities.
- **Informal governance:** Systems of rule-making and enforcement that emerge in the absence of formal state authority, often based on local customs and traditions.
- **Informal justice:** Dispute resolution mechanisms that operate outside of the formal legal system, often relying on community elders or religious leaders.

The contributors to The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality identify a multitude of factors that contribute to the prevalence of informality, including:



The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality, Volume 2: Understanding Social and Cultural Complexity

(FRINGE) by Ulrich Weinberg

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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- **Economic factors:** Poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to formal employment opportunities.

- **Political factors:** Weak governance, corruption, and lack of rule of law.
- **Social factors:** Exclusion from formal institutions, discrimination, and cultural norms that favor informal arrangements.
- **Regulatory factors:** Complex and burdensome regulations that make it difficult for individuals and businesses to operate within the formal economy.

The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality explores the diverse consequences of informality, both positive and negative. On the positive side, informality can provide:

- **Employment opportunities:** Informal work and businesses create jobs for millions of people who would otherwise be unemployed.
- **Economic growth:** Informal activities can contribute to economic growth by providing goods and services at lower costs than formal businesses.
- **Social cohesion:** Informal networks and institutions can provide support and security to individuals and communities, fostering social cohesion.

However, informality also has negative consequences, including:

- **Low wages and poor working conditions:** Informal workers often face low wages, long hours, and unsafe working conditions.
- **Lack of social protection:** Informal workers and their families often lack access to healthcare, education, and other social benefits.

- **Environmental degradation:** Informal activities can contribute to environmental degradation, such as pollution and deforestation.
- **Crime and corruption:** Informality can provide opportunities for criminal activities and corruption, as businesses and individuals operate outside of the law.

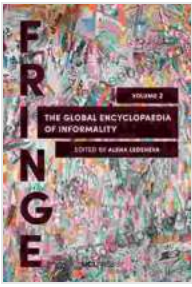
The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality provides numerous examples of informality from around the world, illustrating its diverse manifestations and impacts. Some notable examples include:

- **Street vending:** In many developing countries, street vending is a common form of informal work, providing livelihoods for millions of people.
- **Home-based businesses:** Home-based businesses are another widespread form of informality, particularly in developing countries and among women entrepreneurs.
- **Informal settlements:** Informal settlements are a major feature of urban areas in many developing countries, providing housing for millions of people who cannot afford formal housing.
- **Informal healthcare:** Informal healthcare providers play a vital role in providing healthcare services to communities that lack access to formal healthcare systems.
- **Informal education:** Informal education provides opportunities for learning and skill development outside of formal educational institutions.

The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality concludes with a discussion of the implications of informality for policy and practice. The contributors argue that policymakers and practitioners need to recognize the importance of informality and adopt a nuanced approach that addresses its complex causes and consequences. This includes:

- **Recognizing the positive contributions of informality:** Policymakers should acknowledge the economic and social benefits of informality, while working to address its negative consequences.
- **Supporting informal workers and businesses:** Governments should provide support to informal workers and businesses through measures such as microcredit, skills training, and access to social protection.
- **Improving the regulatory environment:** Governments should simplify regulations and reduce the costs of operating within the formal economy.
- **Promoting social inclusion:** Governments should work to reduce exclusion from formal institutions and address the underlying causes of informality, such as poverty and discrimination.

The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality is an essential resource for anyone seeking to understand the informal sector. Its comprehensive analysis of the causes, consequences, and examples of informality provides valuable insights into this hidden economy and society. By recognizing the importance of informality and adopting a nuanced approach, policymakers and practitioners can harness its positive potential while addressing its negative consequences, promoting inclusive and sustainable development worldwide.

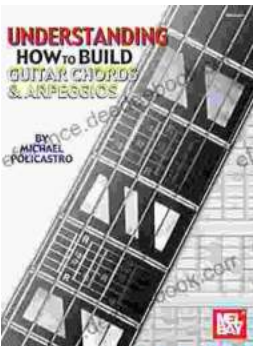


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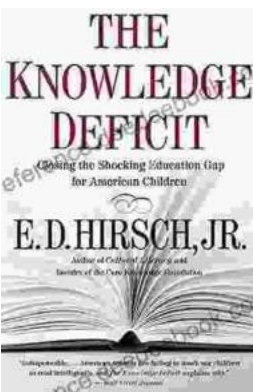
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