Rethinking the Informal Economy: An analysis of the Tianguis in Mexico City

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2-3:30 PM, Deutz Room in the Copley International Conference Center, Institute of the Americas Complex, UCSD

The concept of “informal economy” was created in the 1970’s, and since then debates about its definition, measurement, origin, causes and solutions has never ceased. This phenomenon of “informality” has become a normal reality all around the world. In Mexico the Tianguis, an open-air market that can be traced back to pre-Columbia times, is one of the most important economic and sociocultural activities of the informal sector. A Tianguis in Mexico City usually has a self-organized system that, distinct from our stereotypes of the informal economy, creates order out of chaos. Whether that self-organization is forced by circumstances or develops on its own initiative, how people engage and conduct their daily life to make a living in this Tianguis reflects the reality of Mexican society and provides us with insights on how to approach the nature of the informal economy.

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