

Thursday, April 27th at 4:00PM
Blow Hall - Board of Visitors Room

An Informal World: Informality and Crime

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The informal sector is the context in which socioeconomic activities take place outside the scope of government regulation, and is associated with slums, urbanization, and criminal operations. When discussing the informal sector, we refer to a system that works in parallel to the formal and traditional sector. Informal settlements provide low cost housing for the population of informally employed and underemployed individuals and often fail to meet the standards for a decent quality of life. Therefore, the informal sector, which is characterized by informal employment ranging from gambling and drug trafficking to unregistered vendors and day laboring, is a complex system that has been the focus of development policy making for over a decade. These policies that attempt to develop informal sectors have typically been focused on the gross domestic product of a society, and, while GDP is an important measure of macro level development, in an increasingly slum-filled world, the value of this is questionable. Because informal sectors create contributions to the economy of a society that are not included in the formal GDP of a country, GDP can be misguided, resulting in inaccurate developmental policies. This tends to lead to an arise in urbanization as people migrate from rural to urban areas. This in turn, results in the growth of informality, and thus crime. Originally, these migrants move in search of a better way of life and wider range of opportunity, however, because there is an abundance of people that too are in search for better opportunities, the niche of opportunity becomes slimmer and slimmer. Due to the minimal amount of opportunity in things such as jobs and education many people to turn to other things such as crime just to make ends meet. Therefore, the social aspects of an informal settlement should be the focus of a country that aims to improve the quality of life of its citizens.