This atlas brings together more than 70 case studies of informal markets worldwide. While these markets differ widely in terms of form, size, history and social and economic orientation, they share common trajectories with respect to their exposure to the politics of informality. Mapping their spatial realities and tracing the myriad strands that connect them reveals a global picture of economic struggle and political contestation.

Markets are one of society’s most prevalent and diverse sites of exchange. They are the meeting point for a fluctuating circle of individuals in whose encounters economic, cultural and social concerns intersect. What holds the market as such together is its claim to constitute a locus of multiple forms of agreement. In Greek antiquity, the agora – a centrally located city square – was regarded as a site for political, religious and juridical assembly as well as a marketplace and a place for consultations involving the community of citizens (polis). It was the place in which the public gathered and the character of the public sphere was negotiated on many levels. The development of the modern state has seen a separation of spaces in which politics are conducted from those in which markets operate and capital flows are regulated. This has in turn blurred the divided public character of different forums of civil assembly and of economic resource allocation. In the current phase of neoliberalism, this spatial separation is contributing to an ongoing concealment of the interrelationships within which political and economic forces, the state and capital are increasingly operating outside their respective, established repertoires of action in order to lay claim to market spaces and steer them in speculative terms.

In this context, different evaluations are made of the legitimacy and quality of the operations of individual markets depending on prevailing political, ideological and cultural circumstances. Today, places of public trade operate alternately as sites of opening and reinvention, as forums of reconciliation and integration, as social security nets for immigrant workers, and as sites of ethnic stigmatization and the enslavement of marginalized population sectors. In accordance with the strategic interests concerned, these attributions are used as a basis for facilitating some business activities and endeavouring to repress others that are classified as illegal, dirty and backward. The alleged “informality” of these non-conforming markets is alternately attributed to a lack of modernity, legality, profitability or public order: outmoded infrastructure, tax evasion, violations of trade regulations, product counterfeiting, non-transparent business relationships, health risks, unregulated employment agreements, trespass and traffic obstruction are only some of the many shortcomings of which informal markets are accused.

Seen against the backdrop of the globalization of world trade, the increase of the urban population and unprecedented levels of international migration, however, another picture emerges in which the dual logic of the worldwide spread of informal markets since the 1990s can be discerned. Reorganising politically imposed conditions, informality is a response to and dependent on formal societal structures. But it also exists
independently, producing its own social, economic and cultural spheres.\textsuperscript{3} Within this tension, the definition and ascription of informality has increasingly become a strategic element in a global struggle for economic access, in particular to the processes operating at the lower end of the economic pyramid.\textsuperscript{4} Against this background, the different contributions to this book explore not simply the specific forms taken by the informal economy but also the different paths being marked out by the socio-political conflict around informal markets.

In this sense, the structure of this book is oriented to the instrumental utilization of the concept of informality and the uses which different interest groups derive from it. From this practice-oriented perspective, it becomes possible to discern how in the course of the last decades the concept of informality has developed from a simply structured economic situation into a figure that encompasses all the complexities emerging from the process of globalization. The operative dimension of informality, which is central to these investigations, thus points not only to an abstract, one dimensional plan of action but to a field of forces spread across the world in which different milieus of actors, interests and aspirations unfold at different sites on varying scales. This field is a vehicle of the global economy as well as a site of everyday struggles and the step-by-step development of alternative interconnections.

What can be achieved by tracing these multiform interests around informal trade? Such a cartography has the capacity not only to reflect existing orders of power but also to open up the possibility of the constitution of counter-geographies by liberating sites of informal trade from an ideological delimitation in which the life of traders and the spatial manifestations of their everyday practices are often not appreciated as realities either in political narratives or in media representations of particular regions.\textsuperscript{5} Mapping concrete locations re-territorializes the capitalist politics of abstract currents and relationships. It confronts the flow of commodity values with concrete neighbourhoods, socio-spatial milieus, everyday existential rhythms and urban niche constructions. The mapping of informal economies thus also entails the attempt to counter the de-realization of these everyday worlds and to recognize the relational systems of informal markets as politically and socially meaningful economic structures.

**Determining Informality**

Seen in this way, the maps and tables in an atlas are less a representation of reality than an epistemological instrument that suggests a form of access to the world and, in doing so, also establishes it, a political apparatus that generates attention, directs gazes, makes classifications, marks boundaries and identifies differences. Cartographies are not only an image but also an instrument of redistribution processes; they are an apparatus of human agency and a means by which that agency creates its world.\textsuperscript{6} The definition of measurement parameters and the identification of thresholds determining whether countries belong to poor or rich regions, for example, thus produce a certain idea of the territorial distribution of these categories and at the same time send a signal for national measures designed to influence this picture from the respective national perspective.
Informal networks of migration are now an important component in the transformation of mobility and the ways in which individuals and groups move through space. The seventh person in the world is now an international or internal migrant, meaning that the global population is increasingly heterogeneous and the subjects are beginning to increasingly differ from one another. The fact that almost every country in the world has a migrant population highlights the increasing importance of migration as a force for social and economic change. Informal markets constitute important transfer sites for these distribution chains, not least for the processing of non-monetary parameters such as electricity consumption to complex modelling approaches that include different variables. Whatever methods are ultimately employed, in practice the dispute over the accuracy of abstract estimates often suppresses a theoretical conception of the economic processes on which the investigated variables are based.

It is difficult to estimate the sums of money generated by informal trade. When reports by the International Labour Organization (ILO) state that in Sub-Saharan Africa almost 80 per cent of the working population not engaged in agriculture works in the informal economy or the World Bank publishes statistics showing that the informal economy generates almost half of GDP in most Latin American countries, such figures above all reveal the context in which informality is seen. In the case of the ILO, for instance, the focus is on the type of employment offered to workers and the endeavour to formalize informal working relationships. In the case of the World Bank, the focus is on rising tax burdens, labour market regulation and a low quality of public goods and services and their responsibility for the high level of informal economic activity in countries such as Peru, Bolivia and Georgia, where the informal economy generates over 60 per cent of GDP. These ideological differences correspond to different methods of measurement and significant variations in estimates. The variety of measurement methodologies ranges from direct methods such as surveys and tax audits to a wide selection of indirect methods based on income-expenditure discrepancies, labour market figures, anomalies in monetary transactions and non-monetary parameters such as electricity consumption to complex modelling approaches that include different variables. Whatever methods are ultimately employed, in practice the dispute over the accuracy of abstract estimates often suppresses a theoretical conception of the economic processes on which the investigated variables are based.

It thereby also obscures the circumstances and motivations of people who are involved in informal economies in different ways.

Rather than orienting itself to estimations of aggregate numbers relating to the informal economy and conceiving of it as operating within a – for the most part – negatively connoted oppositional relationship to the formal economy, this atlas seeks to identify the multiplicity of connections between formal and informal economic activities in order to place a spotlight on neglected aspects of informality, such as questions of the legal situation of immigrant workforces, divergent cultural attitudes to organization by business interests, and the geographical delimitation and control of structural poverty in the production of orderly space are playing an important role in these changes as is the bottom-up development of new social realities.

In this context and particularly in light of the rapid growth in the worldwide use of resources linked with the growth paradigm of the free market economy, the need to explore the possibility of more sustainable forms of economic activity is becoming ever more urgent. From this perspective, informality no longer represents merely a situation that needs to be overcome. The complex knowledge it encapsulates has the potential to generate fundamental approaches to the development of an alternative interplay of living...
claim to authority and of promoting a different form of market logic. In contrast to the
ates fissures and openings that can serve as a means of eluding capital’s proliferating

In this sense, this atlas can be seen as a compilation of arenas spread throughout the world
whose common strategy is based on translating systemic instabilities into opportunities.

Performing Informality

While atlases are usually based on a form of classification able to map all the en-
tities included in a specified research field in a way that is consistent and clearly
ordered, the structure we have chosen for this book is better suited to capturing the
transformative capacity, impermanence and opportunistic orientation of informal
marketplaces. Rather than establishing an exhaustive typology of the spaces in which
informal trade takes place, we prefer to contemplate different frameworks underly-
ing or applied to the emergence of informal marketplaces. Such an approach allows
different types of informality to be understood as characteristic patterns of trans-
action through which different spaces and economies are brought together. These
transactions represent a process in which diversities are made compatible through the
establishment of a temporary coherence serving the use of these diversities via
informal points of contact.
Our atlas thus above all aims to map the worldwide relationships that exert an influence on the spontaneous emergence and local form of informal marketplaces. For this reason this book examines its arenas of informality not in terms of geographical regions, types of offerings, scales of magnitude or similar categories but with reference to different opportunity structures that allow informal trade to take place. The fact that informal economic activity cannot be subsumed into a stable and hierarchical taxonomy recalls Borges’ fictive “Chinese encyclopedia”, which served as an inspiration for Foucault’s *The Order of Things* and in which highly idiosyncratic categories of animals - fabulous ones, tamed, stray dogs, animals that look like flies from a long way off and so on – are arranged in purely alphabetical order. As Foucault explains, the disconcerting effect we experience here is not a result of the juxtaposition in itself but rather of the fact that there is no site at which such dissident categories could coexist. What the different classificatory approaches lack is a shared site of propinquity.18 Such a “homelessness” of categories is the model we have used in compiling the arenas of informal trade presented in this atlas. This compilation aims to direct the gaze not at an order supposedly underlying these economic activities but at the political-economic circumstances in which separate systems of coherence are created for economic exchange – regions without explicit form in which new motives, opportunities and settings for informal trade are generated.

The structure of this book thus in large part traces the fault lines inscribed by the global alliance of money and power: wars, borders, profit zones, infrastructures, waste and grey areas. The marketplaces examined here are divided into categories based on the logics of their operation and the perspectives that influence these logics. Depending in each case on who shapes these perspectives and whose interests they serve, different frameworks coexist via which particular interpretations of an informal marketplace are instigated. We have therefore decided to select and group marketplaces in a way that...
most clearly illustrates these differences. Each section presents one informal market world, a system of coherence that produces forms of economic participation and contestation across the globe.

From “Notorious” Markets to Hipster Markets

We begin with a perspective that, rather than referring to an inherent attribute of informal marketplaces, has been foisted upon so-called “notorious markets” (section 1) by the Office of the United States Trade Representative. This strategic criminalization of certain informal market bases on fact-finding exercises, policy reports, international hearings and trade negotiations reflects the aspiration to integrate emerging and growing markets into the global commercial market controlled by the West by demanding protection of intellectual property rights and the comprehensive development of economic standards. In this context, counterfeit goods function as the common identifying characteristic based on which dozens of informal marketplaces are publically stigmatized in annual “Special 301” reports. Such procedures constitute an important political instrument with which the US puts pressure on other states, whether in the context of the negotiation of bilateral trade agreements or the implementation of economic sanctions.

Although generated by other circumstances, informal market in regions where trade is significantly limited by violent conflicts between or within states (section 2: post-conflict markets) are also a consequence of a targeted exertion of influence. In this context, informal economies serve to maintain supply and service structures. In post-war situations, they are often not only attributed a role in maintaining peace but
Emerging and Growth Markets

**EAGLEs’ Nest**: Set of countries with expected incremental economic growth in the next ten years is expected to be higher

- Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, *Developed regions: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States

**CIVETS**: Six favoured emerging countries identified due to their economies in the 21st century

- Bangladesh, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Mexico, Pakistan, Philippines

**Emerging 7 (E7)**: Seven countries predicted to have larger dynamic economies and soaring young populations

- Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, Turkey

- Cote de Ivoire, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Korea

**BRICS**: Five emerging countries with major, fast-growing national economies

- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa

- Latin America (PRB); United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

**Border regions**

- In many cases, informal economies occupy gaps emerging in formal structures (sectoral and individual)

**Economic citizenship**: A shift from economic to the social motivations

- A shift in the emphasis of economic motivations to social motivations

**Sustainability**: This group corresponds to those non-G7 developed economies under the IMF definition which today have GDP of over USD100bn PPP-adjusted

- Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States

**World Populations**: Growth rate

- 2015-2050

**Conflicts and Fragility**: Education

- Water

- Energy

- Environmental Sustainability

- Food Security

- Governance

- Growth and Employment

- Health

- Inequalities

- Population Dynamics

- Food

- Development Agenda ‘The World We Want’

**The World We Want**: Interstitial markets, developing at sites that can be understood as

- In the shadow of state boundaries, which utilize local goods shortages, economic gaps

**Sponsored programmes enabling foreign nationals a quick route to full citizenship**

- “Technopreneurial citizenship”: citizenship based on value-added human capital and driven by the new technological obligations of a self-entrepreneurial citizen

- “Documentary citizenship” (paper citizen): the acquisition and possession of seemingly legal documents by illegal immigrants that “prove” legal membership in a state, a process by which citizenship status can be ascribed to a noncitizen (Ramaz Sani)

**Framwork of Sustainable Development**

**Rate of Self-Employment as Indicator of the Growth of the Informal Economy**

- 2000

- 2010

**Framwork of Sustainable Development**

- Conflict and Fragility

- Education

- Water

- Energy

- Environmental Sustainability

- Food Security

- Governance

- Growth and Employment

- Health

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are seen as a potential source of stimulus for restoring the mainstream economy. Here, too, the question arises as to which interests come into play in the establishment of these new economic structures and the kind of geopolitical control that is being aspired to. Due to the key role of state and national boundaries, such markets are often found in border regions.

Borders are drawn not only to separate regions and populations but also above all to regulate circulations, i.e. to order exchange between different effective entities by means of border mechanisms and protocols. Lateral trade at border markets (section 3) is thus generated in *spite* of existing borders but because the borders in question facilitate an opportunity for exchange. Economic difference and the control of it enable a finely adjusted form of circulation. This is shown by the workings of informal markets operating in the shadow of state boundaries, which utilize local goods shortages, economic gaps or differing legal situations between neighbouring regions as an opportunity to conduct local trade. The extent to which these areas affect not only local contexts but also wider regions that profit from this trade in one form or another often only becomes evident in the elaborate, inventive ways devised by actors in informal economies to evade the numerous regulations and limitations imposed by border controls.

In many cases, informal economies occupy gaps emerging in formal structures (section 4: interstitial markets), developing at sites than can be understood as *between* rather than *adjacent* to those given official recognition. Such informal activity may involve the utilization of otherwise unused sites in urban areas, the appropriation of empty infrastructure or particular time windows that allow for other types of trade – the improvisational dexterity of informal markets in these intermediate zones reveals one of their key strengths: the capacity to improvise in literally every situation. They thereby fulfil an important function both for economically disadvantaged population sectors and in the calculus of state and private actors, which often see such “operating” grey zones as a useful means of controlling and cushioning processes of urban transformation.
Transformations of political systems, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, often bring with them not only a change to the prevailing system but also wide ranging changes in the organization of life at the institutional, social and even technological level. The Soviet containers that proved incompatible with the standardized container systems of the western world, for example, are now being used in this region as building modules for enormous container markets (section 5). These sites take what has become useless and reutilize it, a recycling principle that applies not only to infrastructural facilities but also the goods that are traded. Specialized recycling markets (section 6) can be found throughout the world, offering a range of goods drawn from what has been thrown away elsewhere. The refuse of the Global North’s consumer society, from old clothes and metal to e-waste and broken car parts, thus flows into a further economy, one which cannot exclusively be equated with slums and miserable working conditions. Indeed, in some cases, it could provide a model for a more sustainable use of resources.

Resource awareness plays a particularly significant role in informal economies when the instruments available are extremely limited (section 7: wayside markets). As a rule, street traders do not have much more at their disposal than the goods they carry with them. On the other hand, their compact mobility enables them to service those areas that are mostly denied to stationary informal markets, such as undersupplied residential areas, the peripheries of busy thoroughfares and tourism hotspots. Many established markets also blur into the informal around their edges (section 8: people’s markets). Often, these markets provide sites of resistance against market domination by global brands and international corporations. Both through their insistence on more traditional market operations – highlighting local goods and customs – and by providing a springboard for local talent, these marketplaces oppose the short-termism of neoliberal economic practices. Anchored by structures of self-organization such as market co-operatives and vendor associations, they often sustain a strong sense of belonging. Beyond mere economic exchange, they foster vocal communities in charge of their own infrastructural arrangements. After operating under the official radar for a long time, these markets are now being increasingly exposed to urban investment interests. In many places, the politics governing informal markets has reached a crossroads that has seen them either decline or be reformed in order to free up valuable space and make way for other profit opportunities, or targeted as sites of informal creativity and vitality for incorporation into relocation and urban development programmes.

Currently this situation is most cogently reflected by hipster markets (section 9). From Brooklyn to Bangkok, from California to Scandinavia, these markets play with the flair of the informal in urban space and, with their trendy offerings oriented to the lifestyle of young urban elites, are making an important contribution to the strategic dissemination of development opportunities. In contrast to the classic model of gentrification, they access the city and its possibilities not through the consumption of space but through the consumption of consumption. The culturalization of the informal economy sustains the promise embedded in the neoliberal ideology of privatization, deregulation and do-it-yourself culture. Today such practices of the informalization of urban structures are decreasingly limited purely to the economic realm but rather represent a universal principle that is steering social and cultural imaginations. Clad in the rhetoric of the free market, the informal has found a new place in the consciousness of the Global North: as an urban feel-good zone, as a distraction from concealed economic exclusions and as an instrument for opening up new markets.

In order to explore the multilayered character of informal markets, this book brings together the observations of a large number of authors who have spent years, in some cases even decades, investigating informal marketplaces in situ in order to become acquainted with the multiplicity of perspectives influencing the development of these spaces: from the enormous expanses occupied by container markets in post-Soviet states to small scale, mobile street trading throughout the world, from Yiwu’s “notorious” International Trade City to informal trade under traffic bridges, in sports stadiums and on stretches of industrial wasteland, and from Lagos’ sprawling electronics markets to Bangkok’s red zones of illicit trade. The mapping of these areas reveals a worldwide distribution of trading situations the form of which is often called into question through the use of the attribute “informal.” Tracing the circumstances in which these marketplaces operate – technological changes, changes in political systems, the uneven distribution of prosperity, wars and many other factors that give rise to informal trade – shows how elastically concepts such as legitimacy, equality of opportunity and market conformity are applied to these constellations. The type of world that this book portrays is based on the idea that informal markets represent a globally distributed economic practice that is always oriented to concrete opportunities and whose differences cannot be understood from either a uniform overall perspective or a purely local one. It is rather the expression of a global economic situation in which forces of differing dimensions and ranges converge and create new market conventions.