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Title: Trajectories of Informality: Street Food Vending in a Delhi Neighbourhood

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Abstract: The number of people employed in the "informal sector" is estimated to be more than 70 percent of the total work force of India, and yet its role in the growth of Indian economy has not been fully realized. This thesis first investigates the available knowledge and understanding of the informal sector, and how this sector can play an important role in the development and growth of a country's economy. This study then includes a socio-cultural survey of street food vending in Laxmi Nagar (Delhi). Laxmi Nagar has a well connected metro station and also a dense population of street vendors. The survey highlights some recent dynamics of the street vending and overall food culture in Laxmi Nagar. They offer a range of services to the city dwellers at a remarkably low cost and thereby enable the city to renew its own conditions of living. The dissertation makes an attempt to initiate a "social audit" of sort to understand the contribution of the street food vendors in keeping the city still affordable to many. The observation from the survey leads to some crucial conclusions about institutional mismanagement of informal sector and also to the understanding of its underlying functional structure.

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