

Contextualizing territories in GVC supplier nodes to understand chain entry barriers: the case of the food processing industry in Kenya

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This paper deals with entry barriers for developing country suppliers to global value chains (GVCs). It is based on a study of food processing firms in Kenya undertaken between 2012 and 2014. The paper focuses on how entry barriers to GVCs are sometimes constructed within supplier countries, and not entirely an outcome of chain governance structures. We propose a need for more thorough analysis of historical and present political, social and economic relations and processes going on within supplier countries than are commonly conducted as part of GVC studies. This is essential to our understanding of how ‘the local’ interacts with ‘the global’, and thus to our understanding of the construction, existence and outcomes of entry barriers to GVCs. To conceptualize such a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of a supplier context, and of the processes and relations at play within it, we take our starting point in the theoretical-methodological process of ‘contextualizing territories’, that is the territories in which GVC suppliers are located. From this theoretical foundation, we go on to suggest the concrete content of such an analysis. The Kenyan food processing industry is used as an analytical example.