

From conventional to developmental food networks, and back again? Fragile articulations of global fresh produce chains in Northern Tanzania

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Amongst the diversity of global agro-food chains, the supermarket-driven and standards-heavy, non-organic and non-fair-trade fresh produce chains are typically amongst the last ones to be classified as Alternative Food Networks. Indeed, in line with conventional food networks' characteristics, these agro-food chains are usually portrayed as not anchored in any specific locale, exploitative, ecologically unsustainable and not contributing to social justice.

Meanwhile, current donor interventions in the Global South are increasingly focused on market and value chain development in the agricultural sector. In their quest for poverty reduction, development organizations attribute a key role to such Southern « conventional » agro-food chains catering to the local, regional and global market. In the course, these chains are re-framed as being part and parcel of a moral and developmental economy. This demonstrates that the alternative-versus-conventional binary is permeable and constitutes a field of framing struggles.

Drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork on the local articulation of Global Value Chains through the example of the fresh vegetable export sector in Northern Tanzania, I argue that these local-global value networks are best understood as evolving cycles of dis-/articulation and hence of dipping in and out of different kinds of agro-networks. For this end, I demonstrate the fragility and bumpiness of the process of integrating a new « place » into global food chains. Furthermore, I also follow diverse actors' efforts in translating this « conventional » export market into sustainable local value creation and therefore into a « moral market » respectively a « developmental food network ».