



Veranstaltungsreihe des Instituts für Internationale Entwicklung

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Decent Work and GVC-based industrialization in Ethiopia? Presentation of the EthApparel Project

Wednesday, January 19th 2022, 4.15-5.45 pm

Online Lecture

Link to web conference can be found here:

<https://ie.univie.ac.at/institut/veranstaltungen/ietalks/>

Chair: Johannes Knierzinger

Export-oriented industrialization through global value chains (GVCs) has been a dominant development paradigm since the 1980s, with the apparel export sector being portrayed as the 'entry industry' for countries of the Global South. The sector is however characterized by large power asymmetries between global buyers and an increasing number of supplier firms and countries, which materializes in decreasing export prices alongside increasing requirements and very problematic and even deadly working conditions. Sub-Saharan Africa has been coined as the "last frontier for low-cost labour" with Ethiopia becoming the newest apparel sourcing location. The Covid-19 pandemic and particularly the violent conflict in the North of the country and its recent escalation have however severely impacted apparel firms and workers, and the whole country. In the IE Talk, the EthApparel project is presented, which assesses Ethiopia's integration into the apparel GVC and implications on supplier firms and workers, asking whether "GVC-based development" is a possible and useful development path. But also necessary adjustments to the project are discussed given the ongoing conflict. The project aims to examine the different scales of global buyers and their financialized business strategies, transnational and local supplier firms, and largely female workers in the context of Ethiopia's political economy. Theoretically, the project combines GVC analysis with a class relational approach and labour regime theory. Methodologically, an interdisciplinary research team based in Ethiopia, Denmark, Austria and the United Kingdom conducts surveys with firms and workers, semi-structured interviews, and labour ethnographies.