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**“Governance of Decent Work in Ghana’s Cocoa Industry:
Implications for Economic and Social Upgrading”**

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2021

**Vortrag anlässlich der 61. Jahrestagung der GEWISOLA
(Gesellschaft für Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften des Landbaues e.V.)
„Transformationsprozesse im Agrar- und Ernährungssystem:
Herausforderungen für die Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaften“,
22. bis 24. September 2021.**

Governance of Decent Work in Ghana's Cocoa Industry: Implications for Economic and Social Upgrading

Summary

This paper examines the factors that bring about the participation of smallholders in lead firm governance of labour-related practices. It also clarifies the conditions leading to smallholder decent work through economic and social upgrading. The study is based on qualitative primary data, collected from various key actors along Ghana's cocoa value chains. Our findings show that lead firms govern decent work through vertical paths, horizontal paths and a combination of both paths. In addition, we found that smallholders' participation in vertical, horizontal or both is influenced by incentives, cooperation and multi-stakeholder collaboration, respectively. Our study also reveals two types of economic upgrading—process upgrading and product upgrading—and clarifies the conditions through which economic and social upgrading are interlinked. Overall, our analysis shows that economic upgrading of smallholder cocoa farmers does not fully translate into social upgrading for the smallholders themselves and their farm workers. This is due to the cost of labour, weak labour monitoring, poor health training and education and the structural power of smallholder producers. We contribute to literature on key drivers for smallholder participation in various lead firm governance approaches—as well as on how global governance of value chains may simultaneously promote economic and social upgrading of smallholder producers and their farm workers. The study findings provide avenues for further research to enhance decent work in global value chains through economic and social upgrading.

Keywords: *governance; upgrading; cocoa; Ghana.*

1. Introduction

The agri-food sector is among various industries that have received heightened attention in research on labour related issues in the last decade (KISSI and HERZIG, 2020). Global agricultural value chains (GAVCs) are associated with a large pool of small-scale and low-skilled actors from the Global South. These actors have relatively little chance of upgrading opportunities (BARRIENTOS et al., 2011), since they are commonly integrated within GAVCs at the level of raw material production and wield little power compared to lead firms from the Global North (GRABS and PONTE, 2019). Moreover, Global South actors who are excluded from GAVCs often end up in the informal sector, thus exacerbating decent work deficits (SCHERRER, 2018). Against this backdrop, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have put pressure on lead firms associated with GAVCs to address decent work deficits (NICKOW, 2015). Lead firms have responded by adopting a number of voluntary sustainability initiatives, the focus of which often overlaps with or contains key elements of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO's) core standards for workers' rights and good employment conditions. In this paper, we examine the factors that bring about the participation of smallholders in lead firms' governance of labour-related issues and clarify the conditions required to promote decent work through economic and social upgrading, along Ghana's cocoa value chains (GCVCs). We make two primary contributions. First, we empirically identify how lead firms' strategies advance smallholder participation in the governance of decent work and show the key drivers for

smallholder participation in various lead firm governance approaches (vertical, horizontal and both). Second, we contribute to the literature on how global governance of value chains might promote the economic and social upgrading of smallholder producers and their farm workers—providing valuable insights from an industry influenced by a strong role held by the state (partial market liberalisation).

2. Background

2.1 Value chain governance

Governance shows how the production and consumption processes are taking place, globally, and explicates—for example—the role of lead firm initiatives in filling the gaps left by public initiatives. The governance role of lead firms can be defined as the way in which they organise global supply chains through various instruments (BOSTRÖM et al., 2015). Generally, lead firms in the Global North—such as processors, manufacturers, retailers and supermarkets—govern their global supply chains through vertical paths. In the vertical path, “powerful” lead firms determine product type, quantity and price through “powerless” first-tier suppliers (LUND-THOMSEN and LINDGREEN, 2014). In addition, the vertical path is generally seen as under-emphasising the concept of embeddedness, which remains important for assessing how different governance mechanisms influence labour issues across organisational and geographical scales (LUND-THOMSEN and LINDGREEN, 2014). Given the drawbacks of the vertical path, a horizontal path—one that considers public and local institutional contexts, aiming to alter unequal power relations in global supply chains—has emerged in the last decade (TALLONTIRE et al., 2011). The horizontal form of lead firm governance is characterised by what LUND-THOMSEN and LINDGREEN (2014) describe as a more “cooperative paradigm” between multinational companies, national governments, NGOs, local actors and trade unions to address labour challenges.

2.2 Upgrading for decent work along value chains

Underlying the debate about the governance of decent work along value chains is the question of how the economic and social upgrading of supply chains can be fostered and how they are interlinked. Historically, upgrading has been primarily understood as an industrial process—by which actors participating in a global production network re-organise themselves to improve productivity, connect with markets and enter more economically promising relationships with global buyers (GEREFFI, 1999). The literature distinguishes four different types of economic upgrading: process upgrading (where economic actors transform inputs into outputs more efficiently); product upgrading (where economic actors move into more sophisticated product lines); functional upgrading (where economic actors acquire new functions to increase skill capacity); and chain upgrading (where economic actors move into new but related sectors) (see HUMPHREY and SCHMITZ, 2002 for details). In GAVCs, smallholder upgrading relates more to product and process upgrading (KILELU et al., 2017). This is because, smallholders cannot be explicitly characterised as firms, as described by PEGLER (2015). Therefore, their economic upgrading is spurred by their inclusion in GVCs through skill development training and transfer from the Global North (VICOL et al., 2018). With regard to the governance of working conditions in GVCs, the concept of upgrading has been extended to also reflect socioeconomic conditions for producers and workers resulting in the term social upgrading (BARRIENTOS et al., 2011). “Social upgrading” is the gradual process of achieving decent work along GVC (ILO, 2016). The process acknowledges that all actors fully participate with rights and entitlements

(ROSSI, 2013). There is now a broad consensus that a combination of both forms of upgrading is a necessary condition for decent work (ILO, 2016). There is likewise a broader understanding that global partnerships and the collaboration of governments, the private sector and civil society in the implementation of value chain governance projects can contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (MATHEIS and HERZIG, 2019). Yet—despite this consensus and the broader understanding of upgrading strategies in GVCs—we are only slowly beginning to understand the linkages between economic and social upgrading and how they work in different institutional contexts, to ensure decent work in supply chains.

BARRIENTOS et al. (2011) propose that factors such as the type of economic upgrading (including product upgrading, process upgrading, functional upgrading and chain upgrading); status of work (regular or irregular); supplier strategy (low road, high road or mixed road); and the role of institutions all influence the link between economic upgrading and social upgrading/downgrading, along different global value chains. In our case, we elaborate on the impact of the type of economic upgrading on social upgrading or downgrading. As found in the Moroccan garment industry, both process and product upgrading led to the same outcome of social upgrading for both regular and irregular workers (ROSSI, 2013). Yet BARRIENTOS et al. (2016) also highlight that, in the South and East African horticultural industry, product and process upgrading were likely to enhance social upgrading for skilled workers, permanent workers, women and organised producers with skill capabilities.

In sum, the decent work and upgrading literature has enhanced our understanding of the interlinkages between economic and social upgrading. However, while the concept of processes of governance appears to offer important insights into decent work through upgrading, previous studies have tended to overlook the implications of GVC governance on smallholder producers—simultaneously with the implications on their hired labour. REINECKE and DONAGHEY (2020) criticise the insufficient consideration of workers in supply chain governance structure and literature.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research context

In this paper, we draw on the case of Ghana’s cocoa sector to examine possible factors that stimulate smallholder participation in lead firm governance for decent work and its implications for economic and social upgrading. We employ a qualitative case study approach in Ghana’s cocoa value chain (GCVC). The case is defined as a production system of interconnected key actors, who perform various value chain activities—including input supply by both public and private actors, production, marketing, quality control, export, processing, retailing and consumption.

In Ghana, the cocoa production is numerically dominated by a large pool of about 800,000 smallholder farmers, who rely on family and hired labor (GSS, 2014). This GCVC accounts for about 20% of the world’s cocoa production; Ghana is the world’s second largest cocoa producer, after Côte d’Ivoire (ICCO, 2018). The state plays a strong role in price determination, production and marketing through Ghana’s Cocoa Marketing Board, “COCOBOD,” in what is often described as a partial market liberalisation structure (KOLAVALLI and VIGNERI, 2017). In this structure, the government controls production and has a monopoly on export marketing through COCOBOD. Yet it allows license buying companies (LBCs) to operate the domestic purchase of raw beans, at or above a fixed price that is announced annually.

Despite the strong role of the state, two sets of actors—cocoa-chocolate manufacturers and trader-grinder processors—both coordinate the supply chain in distinctive ways. This is described by FOLD (2002) as a “bi-polar” governance. These lead firms have responded to sustainability challenges and accusations in the GCVC by adopting third party certification standards, “in-house” sustainability programmes and multi-stakeholder initiatives. These initiatives often overlap with (or contain a section of) the ILO’s core workers’ rights and good employment conditions. They can help us to assess the ways in which lead firms interact with smallholder producers and farmworkers in their governance, promoting decent work through economic and social upgrading.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

Qualitative data was collected from a wide range of actors, concerning smallholder participation in lead firm governance for decent work and the key mechanisms in promoting economic and social upgrading. Using purposive and random sampling, we carried out a total of 117 individual interviews and 16 group interviews (with 6 participants on average) in Ghana in 2018. Smallholder farmers were selected based on their involvement in lead firm sustainability initiatives and accessibility. Although we aimed to include as many hired labourers as possible, the difficulties in gaining access to workers led to a higher proportion of smallholders, when compared with permanent hired labour. It should be noted, though, that not all smallholders employ permanent hired workers. We were unable to include casual hired labour in this study, due to difficulties in access and their relative scarcity in our research setting (they more commonly work on plantations, while Ghana’s cocoa production is dominated by smallholder farmers and permanent hired workers). Our primary data was complemented by the available sustainability related reports of various lead firms who source cocoa from Ghana, as well as of NGOs. The data were analyzed via a qualitative content analysis.

We build on ALEXANDER’S (2020) conceptualisation of how lead firms govern sustainability through vertical paths, horizontal paths and both vertical and horizontal linkages. We then expand the analysis, to investigate the key factors underlying smallholder participation. with regard to smallholder upgrading trajectories, we follow BARRIENTOS et al. (2011), and argue that a smallholder cocoa farmer in Ghana is said to have experienced economic upgrading when their income increases. A decrease in income, on the other hand, represents economic downgrading. In this study, we assess the main conditions for higher smallholder income as a result of their participation in lead firm governance for sustainability.

Since—as stated above—economic upgrading may not necessarily lead to social upgrading, we assess the conditions that link both. Following BARRIENTOS et al. (2011), a smallholder cocoa producer in Ghana is said to have experienced social upgrading when there is a combination of: (a) the effective abolition of child labour; (b) elimination of gender discrimination; (c) promotion of occupational safety and health. Similarly, a permanent hired cocoa farm worker in Ghana is said to have experienced social upgrading when there is a combination of: (a) the effective abolition of child labour; (b) promotion of occupational safety and health; (c) increase in wages. A decline in the combination of these indicators, on the other hand, amounts to social downgrading for both smallholder producers and farmworkers. We do not include certain relevant social upgrading indicators, such as freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. This is because, these issues do not currently constitute common labour rights violations amongst self-employed smallholder producers and waged workers on smallholder farms along GCVCs, as they do for waged workers on plantations.

4. Results

We found that the majority of lead firms apply vertical methods in an attempt to promote decent work. These include *vertically defining process requirements* and *vertical integration*. We also found that only a very few lead firms use horizontal methods in the cocoa sector of Ghana. Horizontal strategies, where lead firms manage decent work through local players such as NGOs and local governance actors, take the form of *working relationships based upon partnerships*, *local community forums* and *online connections*. Our analysis also identified four further types of governance mechanisms (incl. compliance, partnerships, support services and voluntary change), in which lead firms combine the use of horizontal and vertical paths to govern decent work along the GCVC. Nearly all the lead firms were involved in the development of decent work-related standards, which they use to control for *compliance* through local governance actors. Our analysis also shows that the *partnership* model, mostly expressed by the Fairtrade certification scheme in Ghana, enables lead firms to promote sustainability through local actors—implementing codes of conduct that are developed by certifiers and enforced by third-party monitors. *Support services* to smallholders are generally a widely spread governance path followed by lead firms, irrespective of whether they source from them or not. Finally, and more generally, there is evidence for wider cooperation—led by the World Cocoa Foundation on a voluntary basis—between lead firms and other governance actors of cocoa production in Ghana. This is done through industry wide initiatives, to enhance decent work by fostering new or modified practices of *voluntary change*. The further condensation of codes of analysis, established after analysing the interview data, provided two key themes. These show how the governance approaches enabled or hampered smallholder participation in lead firms’ governance for decent work—along with their implications for economic and social upgrading.

4.1. Smallholder participation in lead firm governance for decent work

We found different conditions that drive the participation of smallholders in lead firm governance. In those cases of vertical governance paths, many respondents said that the participation of smallholders is stimulated by perceived “non-price” incentives. This was reflected in how smallholder interviewees spoke of benefits—such as access to bonuses, farming inputs, training and credit—as reasons for their participation in sustainability initiatives. As one interviewee put it, “we are part of the certification programme because we believe in getting access to inputs to improve the quantity of our yield.” With regard to horizontal approaches, we found that what drives smallholder participation is cooperation with local actors. During the focus group sessions, smallholder producers made it clear that their role in various committees such as child protection committee, community development committee, gender dialogue platform, women extension volunteers and youth committee in the cocoa life programme of Mondelez indicates a feeling of being part of the solution of sustainable change. In those cases where both vertical and horizontal mechanisms are applied, the majority of the interviewees argue that the participation of smallholders is inspired by multi-stakeholder collaboration regarding the nature of the formulation and implementation of the initiatives. For instance, one lead firm manager commended the “collaboration between different actors in these initiatives, praising the engagement of NGOs, trade unions, COCOBOD, LBCs and other local actors to take up roles such as educating of farmers as key in promoting diffusion and compliance of labour standards because of improved transparency and enforcement.”

However, we also found conditions that hinders smallholder participation in different governance paths. Respondents generally reported high levels of discrimination within the

vertical governance mechanisms, because of the selling conditionality and the high cost. Similarly, many respondents also held the view that horizontal approaches suffer from generally weak local governance structures and the association of the governance process with philanthropy. Moreover, nearly all respondents appeared frustrated by the lack of interest of key local actors coupled with the lack of government support in most of the combined approaches. As described by an NGO manager, “despite the growing number of multi-stakeholder initiatives in the cocoa sector of Ghana, the lack of interest by the majority of locally owned LBCs and the lack of government policies to create an enabling environment may affect participation amongst smallholders and their growing communities”.

4.2. Implications of lead firm governance for economic and social upgrading

The analysis in this sub-section provides key drivers and conditions of smallholder economic upgrading as a result of their participation in lead firm governance. We further proceed to highlight the conditions that explain the link between economic and social upgrading.

Key drivers and conditions of smallholder economic upgrading.

According to the majority of the interviewees, the major driving force for an increase in smallholder income—and thus for economic upgrading—is through an increased yield. Our interviews with a number of smallholder producers confirmed this. They explained that they had improved their harvest from 3–4 bags to 6–8 bags per acre, due to intensified education and training by the LBCs and NGOs through their participation in sustainability initiatives. This type of smallholder economic upgrading, through increased productivity, can be termed process upgrading (BARRIENTOS et al., 2011). Yet many respondents shared with us that efforts to increase yield, or to otherwise achieve process upgrading, are facilitated by the condition of the prevailing cocoa farm-gate price in Ghana, which is fixed by the state depending on the world market price. In addition, transparency in weights is a major condition for process upgrading. Evidence gathered through a focus group discussion with farmers suggests that cheating on weights—which some LBCs do to maximise profit—is one of the major hindrance to smallholder economic upgrading.

Our interviewees also recognised that premium payments—received directly by farmer cooperatives or through LBCs, for producing certified beans depending on buyers’ demands—are a key driving force for smallholder economic upgrading. From our interviews with smallholder producers, it emerged that their ability to produce certified cocoa and the subsequent receiving of premium improves their income. This type of smallholder economic upgrading, through improved skills and the ability to produce high quality cocoa, can be termed as product upgrading. Yet, during the individual interviews and focus group sessions with smallholder producers, they mentioned that the stability and amount of the premium is a condition for a successful smallholder product upgrading.

Link between smallholder economic upgrading and social upgrading/downgrading of smallholder producers themselves and their farm workers.

Link between higher yield and social upgrading/downgrading.

The findings provide evidence that process upgrading through increased yield can lead to social upgrading and downgrading amongst smallholders and their farm workers. According to most of our respondents, the need to increase yield aggravates the risk of child labour amongst both farmers’ and permanent workers’ families. This is due to conditions like the unavailability and

rising cost of adult labour, along with weak local monitoring systems. Most of our respondents also admitted that increased yield or process upgrading worsens occupational safety and presents greater health risks, for both smallholder producers and permanent hired farm workers. This is due to limited access to safety and health training and inadequate access to personal protective equipment (PPE). With regard to gender inequality, most of our interviewees suggested that process upgrading is likely to reduce gender discrimination among smallholder producers through improved access to skill development and training, which are key to increasing women's empowerment. Regarding wage increases, majority of our respondents revealed that increased yield is most likely to improve the wages of permanent farm workers. This is because they receive their income through a sharecropping arrangement known as *Abusa* (which literally means "to divide into three").

Link between Premium Payment and Social Upgrading/Downgrading.

Most interviewees acknowledged that product upgrading through certification programmes are likely to reduce child labour, improve safety and healthy working conditions and reduce gender discrimination among smallholder producers. This is because the premium payment, associated with product upgrading serves as a reward for both quality and labour governance compliance. On the other hand, interviewees also indicated that a premium payment is likely to worsen child labour, occupational safety and health risks and wages for permanent hired cocoa farm workers. This is based on the exercise of smallholder producers' structural power. Nearly all respondents reported that permanent farm workers do not participate directly in certification standards, and thus miss out on the benefits. For example, during a focus group discussion with permanent farm workers, they confirmed that they do not receive any share of the delayed premium payment.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyse the implications of lead firm governance for decent work, through the economic and social upgrading of smallholders and permanent hired farm workers in the cocoa sector of Ghana. By examining the key drivers of smallholder participation in lead firm governance and the conditions for decent work, this article contributes to the growing attention to Global Value Chains (GVCs)—focusing on how multi-stakeholder engagement and processes are shaping the outcomes of economic and social upgrading, in the Global South. First, we found that lead firms govern decent work through both vertical and horizontal pathways, and through a combination of both. In our analysis, we show that incentives are key to promoting smallholder participation in lead firm governance for decent work through vertical pathways. Our result suggests that input-based incentives—such as fertilizers, farming tools, training and credit—trigger farmers' participation in the vertical governance of labour. In the context of horizontal governance, our findings also indicate that lead firm cooperation with local actors is crucial for smallholder participation in decent work governance. We note that the process of lead firms working together with local actors allows for the consideration of local expertise and the locally specific context, improving the participation of smallholders in decent work governance. This implies that expanding the active involvement of Global South actors in lead firm governance for decent work is vital for smallholder participation and may help promote the development of new, emerging governance in the sector (REINECKE and DONAGHEY, 2020). For both horizontal and vertical linkages, we found that multi-stakeholder collaboration is fundamental to promoting the participation of smallholders in decent work governance. We show that such collaborative efforts are essential to promoting smallholder participation through

increased legitimacy, due to a more consultative and real stakeholder involvement that allows for information and knowledge sharing.

Our findings also reveal that smallholders' participation in lead firm's management of working conditions can successfully result in process and product upgrading—through improved and higher yields and premium payments, respectively. Each of these two types of economic upgrading is driven by key conditions. For process upgrading, the data analysis highlights that the role of the state and the opportunism of intermediaries are critical conditions for smallholder economic upgrading. The opportunism of intermediaries implies that LBCs along the chain may cheat smallholders by adjusting the weighing scale. While we appreciate current findings—which show that the role of national government, through institutional environment and governance structures, is essential in the economic upgrading of smallholder producers in the Global South (see, for example: KILELU et al., 2017; LOMBARDOZZI, 2020)—here we explicitly identify what aspects of the state's responsibilities remain key in our case. We recognise that the crucial role played by the state through COCOBOD, in price fixing and stabilisation mechanisms, is imperative for the process upgrading of smallholders who participate in lead firm governance for decent work. Our findings contribute to the debate around the idea that commodity price development, in producing countries, is essential for the economic upgrading of smallholders—due to the increasing price volatility of export-oriented crops (see, for example: TRÖSTER et al., 2019). On top of the role of COCOBOD, our analysis further suggests that the LBCs' opportunistic behaviour and outright cheating remain critical obstacles to successful process upgrading. For instance, our analysis shows that the adjustment of weighing scales by some LBCs acts as a barrier to smallholder economic upgrading. Our results contribute to the growing attention toward “market opportunism” that is exhibited by some LBCs in the cocoa sector of Ghana (see, for example: AMANKWAH-AMOAHA et al., 2018) as a bane to smallholder economic upgrading. For product upgrading, our findings indicate that the amount of premium paid is an important condition for its accomplishment. Our analysis suggests that, despite the effort put into cultivating certified cocoa beans, a substantial amount of these are sold as conventional beans. This raises questions around the commitment and use of sustainable cocoa through certification standards, as claimed by lead firms. On the other hand, it also tends to affect the sustainability of certification schemes as LBCs struggle to find a final buyer for certified cocoa. In sum, the advancement of smallholder product upgrading could be hampered in future.

The data analysis also highlights that both the process and product upgrading of farmer producers result in mixed outcomes on social upgrading based on certain conditions. Contrary to previous evidence showing that both process and product upgrading leads to the same outcome—regardless of the status of the work—for garment industry workers (ROSSI, 2013), or a different outcome based on the status of work for horticultural producers and workers (BARRIENTOS et al., 2016), we present a mixed view. We have found that, while process upgrading leads to the same outcome of social downgrading for both smallholders and their farm workers, product upgrading leads to a different outcome. We found that product upgrading is associated with improved labour issues for smallholder producers and decent work deficits for permanent farmworkers.

Our analysis describes how the link between process upgrading and social downgrading—occurring simultaneously for both producers and farm workers—is intrinsically linked to a number of conditions. For example, we show that process upgrading can lead to the use of child labour in the cocoa sector of Ghana, due both to the rising cost and unavailability of adult labour and to weak labour monitoring in the governance system. We emphasise that the weakness in the labour monitoring system stems from weak local enforcement mechanisms. Also, we show that

process upgrading can lead to poor safety and health conditions for both producers and farm workers, owing to poor health training and education. In addition, we describe how the link between product upgrading and the social downgrading of permanent farm workers is inherently linked to the exercise of structural power by smallholder producers. Our study underscores that product upgrading can lead to the use of child labour, poor safety and health conditions and lower wages for permanent farm workers. This is owing to the structural power exercised by smallholders vis-à-vis the low bargaining power of farm workers, as shown elsewhere (see, for example: RIISGAARD and OKINDA, 2018).

Overall, our findings underscore that smallholder participation in lead firm governance does not automatically translate into economic upgrading—and that, even if it does, waged workers on smallholder farms do not socially benefit. While we share with CRAMER et al. (2016) and RIISGAARD AND OKINDA (2018) our interest in the poorest rural workforce focus—that is, waged workers on smallholder farms and smallholders—this research offers an important additional insight. Namely, we highlight the conditions under which the economic upgrading of smallholder producers can lead to specific social upgrading indicators for smallholders and their waged workers, mutually. We also show that smallholder producers do not solely rely on family labour, as perceived in the prior literature.

In conclusion, we have identified a number of issues that require attention, to promote smallholder participation in lead firm governance—while simultaneously fostering economic and social upgrading for both smallholder producers and their farm workers. Future policy and research focusing on strengthening and identifying additional non-price incentives could positively influence and attract smallholders to participate in decent work governance in Ghana. Likewise, future research into how to build and operate cooperation on the foundation of mutual benefit—rather than on competition among different actors in GCVCs—is key (see, for example: AYALA-OROZCO et al., 2018). This may help to advance our understanding of how cooperation amongst key actors can have a more powerful impact in improving smallholder participation in lead firm governance for decent work. Since multi-stakeholder collaboration favours the participation of smallholders in both horizontal and vertical paths of lead firm governance, empirical enquiry into how to improve active multi-stakeholder engagement amongst diverse groups of stakeholders in the GCVCs also appears to be a promising path for future research (see for example, VAN TULDER and KEEN, 2018). Our analysis also suggests that process upgrading of smallholders can successfully be achieved under the conditions of a price stabilisation mechanism—and by overcoming the opportunistic behaviour of intermediaries. Future research could explore ways to make COCOBOD's management of price fixing and regulation of LBCs more effective and transparent. Finally, our analysis suggests that important conditions—such as the cost of labour; the labour monitoring system; health training and education; and the exercise of structural power for economic and social upgrading—are all interlinked. Future research could thus analyse the most effective ways to reduce labour costs among smallholder producers and their relation to economic and social upgrading. Likewise, future studies could explore policies and strategies related to improved local labour monitoring amongst cocoa farmers and cocoa growing communities in Ghana. Lead firms—along with COCOBOD and LBCs—should intensify safety and health education amongst producers and in their growing communities. Research into how the power and governance structures for smallholders and their farm workers can create positive or negative upgrading outcomes also merits more attention (see for example, RIISGAARD and OKINDA, 2018). These studies could promote an improved understanding of how economic and social upgrading are linked, for both producers and farm workers in the Global South.

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