



Deindustrialization and racial inequality: Social polarisation in eThekweni?



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ABSTRACT

Scholars have argued that deindustrialization has had different effects on the occupational structure of South African cities. Some have argued for a polarisation of the occupational structure, where the decline of the manufacturing sector is argued to result in a loss of middle-income jobs. This is accompanied by large growth of employment in high-income and low-income jobs, resulting in an occupational structure bereft of middle-income jobs and polarised between classes of high-income and low-income workers. Others have argued for a professionalizing pattern defined by the predominant growth of employment in highly-skilled, high-income managerial, professional, associate professional and technical jobs. In contrast to the growth of highly-skilled jobs is the stagnation or decline in growth of all other occupational groups, and rising unemployment. These changes in the occupational structure have also been argued to have specific consequences for persisting racial inequality. This study tests the aforementioned theories of occupational change by looking at the metropolitan municipality of eThekweni, which houses the city of Durban. It demonstrates that deindustrialisation in eThekweni is undergoing a pattern of middle-income, semi-skilled growth that does not support the polarisation or professionalization hypotheses. It also produces evidence that does not support the argument that deindustrialisation results in an occupational structure polarised between a class of mostly white, highly-paid managers and professionals and a class of mostly black (black Africans, coloureds and Indians) low-paid service workers as the eThekweni middle-class is undergoing substantial de-racialisation. However, it argues that inter-racial inequality still persists due to the uneven high-representation of whites in high-income jobs, opposed to the class of low-income workers and unemployed which are almost entirely dominated by black Africans. Alongside this is a pattern of deepening intra-racial inequality between the growing black African middle class, and the class of black Africans which dominate the unemployed.

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1. Introduction

There is considerable debate over how economic restructuring has affected occupational inequality in large deindustrialising cities. In the context of contemporary South Africa, inequality is rampant; vast numbers of the population live in poverty and are unemployed. A severely high national unemployment rate seems to indicate that many are unable to meet the demands of a changing economy, despite attempts to spur on local economic development through policy-backed interventions and empowering local initiatives to find jobs and practical solutions to poverty (Nel & Rogerson, 2005: 13). Such economic challenges will be particularly present in South Africa's cities, as local economic centres. In this paper we aim to analyse the changes within

the occupational structure of the metropolitan area of eThekweni, which houses the city of Durban, and how the changing occupational trends relate to arguments about urban inequality, specifically testing the social polarisation hypothesis. We further also aim to analyse the relationship between the changing occupational structure and racial inequality.

Scholars have argued that the deindustrialization has had varied effects on the occupational structure of cities, such as the occupational polarisation of the employed workforce, argued to be the absolute growth in employment of high-income managers and professionals and low-income service-sector workers alongside the decline of employment in semi-skilled, middle-income jobs (Baum, 1997; Chiu & Lui, 2004; Friedmann & Wolff, 1982; Harrison & Bluestone, 1988: 121–123; Sassen, 2001). Others have argued that the occupational structure has undergone professionalization, which is defined by the substantial growth of highly-skilled managerial, professional, associate professional and technical jobs and the stagnation of semi-skilled, middle-income and low-skilled, low-income jobs (Bailey & Waldinger, 1991; Baum, 1999; Borel-Saladin & Crankshaw, 2009; Clark & McNicholas, 1996;

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Crankshaw, 2012; Hamnett, 1986, 1994, 1996, 2003; Hamnett & Cross, 1998; Timberlake, Sanderson, Ma, & Derudder, 2012).

There is also a debate over how the changing occupational structure of cities has shaped patterns of racial inequality. There is agreement between social polarisation and professionalization theorists about the persistence of racial inequality. They agree that the recent decline in manual, middle-income jobs has increased racial inequality as blacks bore the brunt of these blue-collar job losses and the resultant unemployment. Whites, in contrast, benefited from the growth of high-income jobs and white-collar middle-income jobs allowing them greater access to social mobility relative to blacks. However, there are also important differences between these theorists: proponents of the social polarisation hypothesis argue that the employed workforce is becoming racially polarised, with blacks concentrated in low-skilled, low-income service jobs while well-paid and highly-skilled managerial and professional jobs are dominated by whites (Baum, 1997, 1999; Harrison and Bluestone 1988, 70; Lemanski, 2007; Sassen, 1990: 83–4; Sassen, 1998: 46; Sassen, 2001: 321). Those in favour of professionalization have argued that racial inequality is more complex, and they disagree that blacks are almost solely represented in low-skilled, low-income jobs and present evidence that there has been some upward social and occupational mobility for blacks. Additionally, they argue that due to the increasing demand for skilled-employment, there is growing unemployment for those who are not skilled, particularly low-skilled blacks (Kasarda 1989, 33; Kesteloot 1995, 211–14; Kesteloot 2000, 199–201; Ortiz, 1996; Wilson, 1980; Wilson 1987, 39–41; Wilson 1996, 30). They argue that the upward mobility experienced by some blacks contrasts with growing unemployment: emphasising this pattern of intra-racial inequality, alongside the pattern of inter-racial inequality (Crankshaw, 2008, 2012).

Studies of Cape Town and Johannesburg have investigated the effect of deindustrialization on the occupational structure in the context of the South African city. As this study looks at the city of Durban, conceptualised here as the entire Metropolitan Municipality of eThekweni (Fig. 1), we focus on analysing the changes in its occupational structure and testing the social polarisation hypothesis. In analysing the relationship between the changing occupational structure and racial inequality, we aim to specifically test the argument made by Lemanski (2007) in her study of Cape Town that deindustrialization has created a social polarisation based on race. She argues that whites dominate the better-paid and more skilled jobs in comparison to black (African, coloured and Indian) workers who, due to the decline of middle-income working class jobs, are predominantly employed in low-income jobs with their access to employment in high-income work severely limited. We provide evidence that eThekweni has indeed experienced deindustrialisation, but in contrast to Cape Town and Johannesburg, the decline of the manufacturing sector in eThekweni occurred later, in the mid-2000s. We also provide evidence that eThekweni has not experienced occupational polarisation or professionalization, but has undergone a pattern of employment growth dominated by semi-skilled, middle-income growth. Our findings show that employment change in eThekweni from 1980 to 2014 conformed to neither a polarising nor a professionalizing pattern of growth. Instead, much more employment growth took place in semi-skilled, middle-income occupations (both blue-collar and white-collar) than in low-skilled, low-income and highly-skilled, high-income occupations.

Regarding racial inequality, our results show that the pattern of middle-income growth in employment in the city has been accompanied by the movement of Africans and Indians into both semi-skilled, middle-income jobs and highly-skilled, high-income jobs. However, whites remain over-represented in the highly-skilled and best-paid jobs, contrasting with how poorly-educated blacks are excluded from better-paid non-manual jobs. Africans strongly dominate employment in low-skilled, low-income jobs and they additionally almost entirely comprise the class of unemployed in the city. Thus, we argue that eThekweni is experiencing a pattern of racial inequality

characterized by a division between an occupationally-mixed, racially-mixed employed workforce and a growing African unemployed working class. This contrasts with the growing number of Africans employed in skilled, well-paid jobs.

2. Decline of employment in manufacturing in eThekweni

eThekweni, along with Johannesburg and Cape Town, is one of South Africa's largest cities and is the focal point of the large Kwazulu-Natal province (Morris, Barnes, & Dunne, 2001). This study looks at employment trends in the entire Metropolitan Municipality of eThekweni, which includes the city of Durban and surrounding towns like Umdloti and Verulam.

Historically the manufacturing sector has played a larger role in the eThekweni economy than in Cape Town or Johannesburg. Both Freund (2000) and Prinsloo (1996) argue that manufacturing industries, such as clothing, chemical, food and automotive industries were crucial in the development of the city's economy, which has been home to many branch plants. The role of the port, one of the largest coastal trading ports on the African continent, is crucial as it has been South Africa's principle coastal trading link to the world since the early 20th century (Freund, 2000). Due to the trade-power of the harbour, the production and exporting of goods has been the focus of eThekweni's economy for decades, which has further cemented the city's status as a manufacturing hub (Freund, 2000). Employment in manufacturing consistently accounted for about 30% of employment within the area in the early 1980s (Bell, 1983: 1–2) and Morris et al. (2001) further argue that in the early 2000s 30% of eThekweni's GDP came from manufacturing. Additionally, there has historically been a demand for unskilled labour employed in elementary occupations, such as stevedoring or longshoreman working at the docks (Dubbed, 2003). This is notably different to the Johannesburg economy, which is increasingly dominated by services and finance, being home to many head offices (Crankshaw & Borel-Saladin, 2014: 1855).

Post-Apartheid migration, specifically from southern parts of Africa, has become a major social and political issue in South African cities since the xenophobic attacks of May 2008. Such large migration is evident in eThekweni, with estimations that there are over 100,000 such migrants in the city (Freund, 2010: 289). While the xenophobic violence in 2008 was less severe in eThekweni than in Johannesburg or Cape Town, such violence has occurred in impoverished communities suffering from high unemployment, where poor migrants seek similar informal sector jobs to locals and are perceived as unwelcome competition (Freund, 2010: 289). While this study is not focused on xenophobia, our results indicate growing unemployment in the city, which could fuel the conditions often present for protests and violence showing the potential wider social impact of the urban occupational change that this paper analyses.

3. Research method

As the arguments within the debate are focused on the numerical changes of urban occupational structures, they are quantitative in nature. Hence, this study relies on the employment statistics collected by population censuses and the later Labour Force Surveys (LFSs) to test the social polarisation hypothesis by measuring the occupational changes in the employed workforce of eThekweni over the last few decades, and also compare our results to that of other South African cities. These censuses and surveys are based on the enumeration and sampling of households and not of formal businesses. As such, they measure all the kinds of economic activities, including informal sector activities. In fact, the LFSs are specifically designed to ensure that informal sector activities are included in the measurement of employment and self-employment (Stats S.A., 2013: 15). This study draws upon several sets of data: firstly, the population censuses which cover a series from 1980 to 2001, specifically including data from

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