EF2: Social polarisation, the labour market and economic restructuring: an urban perspective

PRESENTATION OF THE MAIN IDEAS
KEY THEMES

- LABOUR MARKETS
- SOCIAL POLARISATION
- ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING
- MIGRATION POLICIES
Social polarisation

Not an unitary phenomenon → it encompasses different processes:

1. Economic transformation and its effects on the occupational structure
2. Spatial and contextual effect of social polarisation
3. Employment restructuring
4. Emerge of dualistic migration policies
1. Economic transformation and effects on occupation structure

• From the ’70s: trends towards dualisation of workforce due to transition from Fordism to Post-Fordism

• Clear empirical evidence comes from countries with:
  - Weaker and less universalistic welfare state
  - Those who have experimented economic crisis
2. Spatial and contextual effects of social polarisation

Spatially demarcated ‘ghettos’ of the rich and the poor increases visibility of social disparities

Consequences:

- Labelling effects
- Impoverishment of social ties
- Effects on education and skill acquisition
- Reinforce labour market inequalities
3. Employment restructuring

Labour markets:

Important determinants of social polarisation & Key mechanism behind opportunities available to different social groups

BECAUSE they mediate between different elements:
3. Employment restructuring (II)

- Changing bargaining strategies
- Immigrant & local individuals
- Formal & informal economies
- Supply skilled and unskilled workers
- Changing occupational structure
3. Employment restructuring (III)

CONSEQUENCES of employment restructuring:

1. Changes connections between workers and labour markets

2. Labour market deregulation changes in the relationship between formal and informal economies

3. Severe inequalities in access to employment
3. Employment restructuring (VI)

4. Casualisation:

- Employment shifts from full time and permanent to higher levels of causal positions
- Work precariousness becomes structural feature of European labour markets
3. Employment restructuring (VI)

**Casualisation**

Accelerated by an economic crisis → reduction in well-paid jobs provokes a cascading process of reducing social mobility:

- It can push entire segments of the population out of the labour market
- It restricts the growth of the advanced producer service
- It pushes temporary workers out of the workforce
- It reduces the capacity of the state to intervene
4. Emergence of dualistic migration policies

Increase of migration flows to European cities due to:

- economy growth last decade
- demand for low-paid labour
- economic situation in migrant’s countries
- lower costs of international transport

- War refugees
- Asylum seekers
- Family reunification
- Labour migrants
- Undocumented migrants
4. Emergence of dualistic migration policies (II)

Increase of undocumented migrants due to:

- Tightening of legal and administrative requirements and legislation

- Followed by a dual approach orientated to reinforce labour market segregation
4. Emergence of dualistic migration policies (II)

Rich global cities

Polarised labour markets that need:
- highly skilled migrants
- low skilled migrants

European governments:
- give preference to high skilled migrants
- refuse to recognise need for low skilled migrants

Dualistic nature of migration policies
Research recommendations

1. Need for comparative research on polarisation and segregation in European cities focusing on:

- Economic and employment restructuring
- Spatial differentiation and its effects on social polarisation and cohesion
- Dualistic nature migration policies
Research recommendations (II)

2. Need of better understanding how social polarisation processes are structured in different cities, putting special emphasis on Eastern and Southern areas.

3. There are 2 issues that deserve special attention:
   - Economic role, situation and integration of migrants
   - Impact of economic recession on urban labour markets and on social cohesion