

Is there a new service proletariat? Post-industrial employment growth and social inequality in Spain.

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The aim of this paper is to investigate post-industrial change in employment and its consequences for social inequality in Spain in the last decades. Since 1994 employment has increased by about 6 millions persons (+30% for men and +66% for women). In particular Spain, together with Ireland, has enjoyed the greatest relative increase in employment in the service sector in Europe (European Commission 2003). Moreover Spain is characterized by a comparatively high level of employment in consumer services (hotels, restaurants and personal services). What are the implications of these changes in the employment structure for social inequality? In particular, are unskilled occupations in the consumer service sector springboards towards better positions or are they long-term traps? This type of research question was put forward more than 10 years ago by Esping-Andersen (1993) in a comparative study on social stratification in post-industrial society. In order to address it for the Spanish case, we perform three analyses. First of all, we describe patterns of employment change and growth in Spain in the last 25 years, using Browning and Singelmann's typology for employment sectors and Esping-Andersen's (1993) class scheme. Second, we identify the main characteristics of those who are employed in low level unskilled occupations in the service sector. Finally, we investigate whether the risk of entrapment in unskilled positions and the risk of falling into unemployment differ among industrial and service workers. We use data from the Spanish Active Labour Force (EPA) survey for different years in order to study occupational change and class composition. Moreover we employ the EPA rotation panel to study the risk of entrapment in unskilled occupations by means of a dynamic analysis.