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A new theoretical analysis of deindustrialisation

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Cambridge Journal of Economics, Volume 38, Issue 6, 1 November 2014, Pages
1373–1390, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cje/bet029>

Published: 16 July 2013 **Article history** ▼

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Abstract

The analysis of deindustrialisation has been led by heterodox economists, especially those in the structuralist and Kaldorian traditions, based on a

conception of sectoral specificity and the role of manufacturing in growth. Sectors are not the units of Marxian economic analysis, but thinking through the meaning of sectors in Marxian terms allows for an analysis of the meaning and implications of a change in sectoral structure.

Deindustrialisation is the sectoral shift that has been most prominent in recent decades and which is likely to have significant implications for the future of capitalism. This article develops an original Marxian theorisation of deindustrialisation. This conceptualisation includes a distinction between two forms of deindustrialisation. As well as taking into account changes in sectoral structure, the proposed typology considers whether such changes are associated with a shift between those activities that produce surplus value and those that do not or only a shift in the composition of surplus-value-producing activities. The distinction between different forms of deindustrialisation allows for an arguably richer analysis of this phenomenon than in more narrowly sector-based approaches.

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