

C. PRODUCTIVE SERVICES

EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES

by Norman Bromberger

Introduction

Recently I have been doing survey work on family histories of urbanisation (towards Pietermaritzburg). The project is not complete however, and so I intend to put together some results from earlier work in this area which seem to have some bearing on the topic. What does need to be stressed is that the discussion relates to the Pietermaritzburg area - and so is not informed by detailed knowledge of deeply rural areas.

Employment

1. I suppose the place to begin is with **individuals** in rural households - whether those households are in 'reserves' or on commercial farms, or occasionally on something else such as freehold African land, 'mission reserves' etc. - who move to urban areas to work or look for work. Wage employment in rural areas is limited in supply and/or low-paying; market-oriented self-employment in farming or other rural-based activities is risky and (for the most part, given low-density markets) yields low average returns; and 'subsistence production' provides an own-consumption supplement but does not (by definition) give access to the desired levels and types of material consumption (of purchasable commodities).

2. A common pattern historically (at least partly as a result of legislative/administrative controls) has been for such individuals to move on a **temporary** basis - at least to start with - returning for shorter or longer periods to the rural households to which they remain attached. It is often assumed that these 'migrants' are predominantly **male**. However, where substantial suburban populations exist in large urban areas, there is scope for female migration to domestic service jobs - and my impression is that some version of this pattern will be perpetuated as the employment of domestics increases among higher-income African urban families.

3. At some stage, for **some** of the employed individuals, a **more permanent settlement** is made in the urban area - involving the acquisition of own accommodation and the establishment of a family/household in town. I do not know what the determinants of these choices are - why some men (say) live out their working-lives in hostels in Durban and retire to Eshowe, whereas others move (say) to a 'tribal area' closer to Durban, or become part of an informal settlement, or rent rooms (eventually perhaps a house) in Clermont or some such area. I am sure

studies of migrancy by Schlemmer, Møller and others will have shed some light on this question.

4. The above move from oscillatory migration to permanent urban settlement may presumably **take place in stages** - along both the family and spatial dimensions. It is the latter I am interested in. Within historically - and otherwise - defined circumstances, permanent movement away from rural locations towards towns has often taken place

- (a) to **peri-urban areas outside towns** - either 'tribal' or freehold African (as is the case of Edendale outside Pietermaritzburg) or 'squatter' etc.;
- (b) or **ex-farm to 'tribal' (or reserve) areas** - but I imagine usually with an urban-orientation.

In the parts of KwaZulu to the South-West and South-East of Pietermaritzburg both of these processes can be observed. In both Vulindlela (West) and Ximba (East - near Cato Ridge) **about, or just under, half** of household heads were born elsewhere and have moved in to the localities. Of these in-migrants **more than half** (about 30 per cent of the total number of household heads) were born on farms.

5. Within a rural/peri-urban/urban belt around the Pietermaritzburg-Pinetown-Durban axis a good deal of **commuting to employment** takes place (I am looking at this from the Pietermaritzburg end). Some of it is daily, some weekly or monthly, and some involves longer distances and absences. But this is how the connection with urban employment is made and sustained. Perhaps I can illustrate this with some detail from Ximba (near Cato Ridge).

We carried out a 512 household survey there in 1987. Labour-force participation was relatively low (for females in the working age-group : 34 per cent) and unemployment high (male 31 per cent, female 47 per cent). Still, on average 1,5 persons were employed per household.

Of these employed persons, only 4 per cent might be said to have been working at a substantial distance from Ximba. Of those whose work localities are known, 7 per cent worked locally in the area, 30 per cent in Cato Ridge and a further 11 per cent in other localities

within a few kilometres (Camperdown, Umlaas Rd, Ashburton, Drummond etc.). In other words, just on one half worked within a short distance from home. At increasing (though still small) distances, Hammarsdale took 10 per cent, Pinetown 8 per cent, Pietermaritzburg 7 per cent and Durban 13 per cent.

57 per cent of employed workers slept away from home on an ordinary working night. Almost all such absent workers in the Ximba case returned at least once a month to their peri-urban homes (in Vulindlela some 30 per cent of absentees return **less** frequently than once a month).

6. What is the urbanised end of this community-with-absence-from-home like? Where do people stay? Presumably hostels, lodging, and employer's premises are available.

(a) A sub-sample of a larger sample survey in Vulindlela in 1986 will illustrate : Near Mpopophomeni township in an area called Emashingeni 87 individuals in a population of 546 (close to 16 per cent) usually 'slept away' (81 were away working). Of the 46 male absentees who were working, 37% were in work-hostels or compounds, 35% in lodging, 20% in general hostels, 4% were live-in domestics and 4% lived in their own houses elsewhere. Of the 34 female absentees who were working 74% were live-in domestics, 18% were in work-hostels or compounds and 9% were lodgers.

(b) In the heart of the 'lodger-belt' in Edendale (Machibisa) a recent survey of 514 'plots' established that about 80 per cent of these had some form or degree of **lodging**. The total number of 'family units' (including simple families) on these plots was close to 2 830 (or over 5 on average). Female presence is very marked here. Many people have come in from country areas (reserves) and female labour-force participation is much higher than in tribal areas 20 or 30kms out; here it is as high as the male rate.

7. What happens to the urbanisation tendency when urban unemployment levels rise? Presumably we have to start with a (rough) version of the Todaro hypothesis which implies that if there is a substantial gap between rural and urban incomes then people may still continue to move to town in the face of substantial urban unemployment. This will hold all the more for many rural-dwellers who do not have land or only

engage in very low-yielding subsistence agriculture. However we must remember that there **are** rural opportunities in commercial agriculture and S. Stavrou has found some evidence in the Wartburg area of farm workers returning to farms after unsuccessful forays into urban work-seeking.

Unemployment

1. How is unemployment distributed between rural/peri-urban and urban areas? First, you have to decide how you are going to measure it - which means saying who is in the labour-force (if you wish to express unemployment as a rate). Are Vulindlela workers working in Durban part of Vulindlela's labour-force or Durban's? I have tended to take the former option. Then, you need to notice that the wage-labour force participation rate varies with locality - partly because the further out you are the less you conceive of employment as a possibility and so the less you are likely to regard yourself as 'wanting' or 'seeking' (certainly) employment, but partly because the more rural the area - perhaps I am making too large a claim - the more likely you are to be integrated with a pattern of time-use and allocation which does not fit easily with wage-employment.

2. One example of this : responses to a hypothetical offer of 'employment scheme' work to women (1989) in Vulindlela/Ximba indicated that about 60 per cent of people classifying themselves as 'not in the wage labour force' said they would **not** take **local** employment on a scheme involving manual work at R7,50 per 3 hour work stint. Even more said they would not for R7,50 per day.

3. Measured unemployment in 1986 was lower in Vulindlela (peri-urban 'tribal' area, 10 to 40 kms from city centre) than in the African townships (first 4 localities below), though the differences were not enormous.

	CPS* definition	Own Classification
Sobantu	**25	**29
Imbali	30	34
Ashdown	34	40
Edendale	31	37
Vulindlela	24	32

* CPS= Current Population Survey (source of official unemployment statistics).

** Employment scheme organised in Sobantu. □