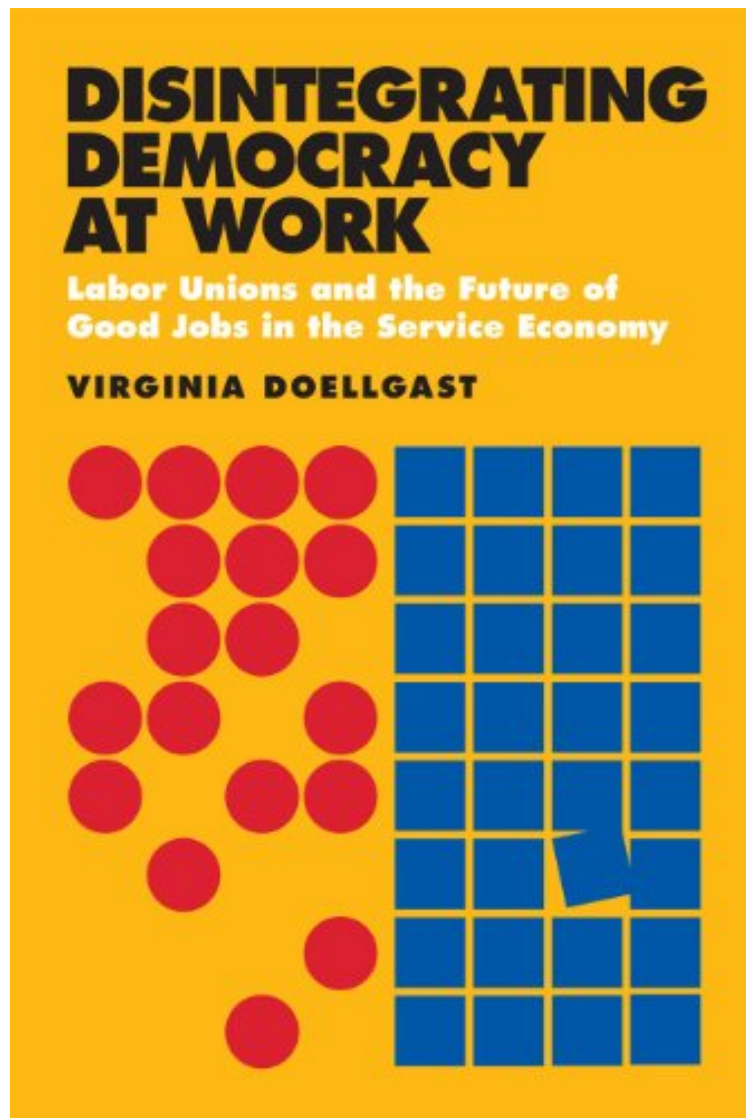


(Get free) Disintegrating Democracy at Work: Labor Unions and the Future of Good Jobs in the Service Economy

## Disintegrating Democracy at Work: Labor Unions and the Future of Good Jobs in the Service Economy

Virginia Doellgast

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The shift from manufacturing- to service-based economies has often been accompanied by the expansion of low-wage and insecure employment. Many consider the effects of this shift inevitable. In *Disintegrating Democracy at Work*, Virginia Doellgast contends that high pay and good working conditions are possible even for marginal service jobs. This outcome, however, depends on strong unions and encompassing collective bargaining institutions, which are necessary to give workers a voice in the decisions that affect the design of their jobs and the distribution of productivity gains. Doellgast's conclusions are based on a comparative study of the changes that occurred in the organization of call center jobs in the United States and Germany following the liberalization of telecommunications markets. Based on survey data and interviews with workers, managers, and union representatives, she found that German managers more often took the "high road" than those in the United States, investing in skills and giving employees more control over their work. Doellgast traces the difference to stronger institutional supports for workplace democracy in Germany. However, these democratic structures were increasingly precarious, as managers in both countries used outsourcing strategies to move jobs to workplaces with lower pay and weaker or no union representation. Doellgast's comparative findings show the importance of policy choices in closing off these escape routes, promoting broad access to good jobs in expanding service industries.

"Through a compelling comparative analysis of work reorganization in U.S. and German call centers following the liberalization of telecommunications markets, Doellgast shows that workplace democracy and encompassing collective bargaining institutions are central factors shaping job quality in service settings where managers encounter strong incentives to cut labor costs. . . . *Disintegrating Democracy at Work* is a mandatory read for anyone interested in understanding the relationship between national institutions, management strategies, and worker outcomes in the expanding service sector."?Tashlin Lakhani, *ILR* (October 2012) "There is something for everyone to take away from this book: academics, managers, union leaders, and policy makers alike. Doellgast also leaves the reader with some hope. Convergence on poor working conditions and low pay is not the inevitable outcome for noncore service workers. Differences in national industrial relations institutions and strategies adopted by worker representatives to pursue dignity in the workplace can reduce economic inequality and fundamentally alter management strategic choice in adoption of high- versus low-road employment models."? Dionne Pohler, *Work and Occupations* (February 2013) "In vivid descriptions of the call centers she spent time in, and eye-opening interviews, Doellgast shows us the wide range of experiences call workers have. . . . She uses call centers to illustrate all that is wrong with advanced economies, as well as how things can be made right. . . . The object lesson is clear: high-skill, high-participation, high-wage workers are not just happier campers, they are better for business."?Frank Dobbin, *Administrative Science Quarterly* (March 2013) "This study is exemplary in its impressive attention to details regarding working conditions and industrial relations machinery, and in its combination of enterprise and regulatory histories with present-day quantitative and qualitative results. Furthermore, the book excels by attractive writing and presentation: the reader is put in the picture right from the start by an excellent summary chapter that explains general results at length and in the comparative context of the two countries. This overview leads on to the more detailed chapters in such an appealing way that the reader at all times understands the specific results as part of the wider picture."?Arndt Sorge, *British Journal of Industrial Relations* (March 2013) "The author successfully claims a contribution in presenting a study of networked firms and the impact of decisions in one organization on its collaborating partners, concluding that regulation at the inter-organizational level is a necessary support to formal participation models. . . . Doellgast's extended study. . . supports the author's optimism that unions have an important contribution to make to lower skilled, secondary jobs in the service economy."?Shelagh Campbell, *Relations Industrielles/Industrial Relations* (2013) "A valuable contribution to the field of comparative industrial relations. This book examines the role of unions within modern service workplaces by delving into case study analyses of the telecommunications and call center industries. . . . I highly recommend this book for those interested in comparative industrial relations and for anyone who wants to gain a better understanding of the telecommunications industry and/or U.S. and German employment systems. . . . Doellgast's theoretical framework and discussion of the findings offer an engaging read for students, scholars, and practitioners."?Monica Bielski Boris, *Labor Studies Journal* "The author presents a complex, evolving picture in the analysis of her data set. . . . Although Doellgast has been influenced by . . . the global call centre project, she extends the analysis in important ways. Intriguingly, while the global project did not find meaningful associations between trade unionism and high employee involvement systems this relationship lies at the heart of this book. Overall, the author provides valuable evidence of the challenges that globalization poses to social market labour regimes."?Bob Russell, *British Journal of Sociology* (2013) "The book is well written and in large part a pleasure to read.... The topic of the book?the influence of different industrial relations regimes on managerial strategies, the development of working conditions and pay?is not new, but the book is outstanding in its broad empirical base and richness of data.... For unionists and policy makers striving to improve job quality in call centers and similar industries with secondary service-jobs, the book is an excellent argumentation aid as it provides ample evidence that this aim can be achieved and demonstrates how it can be done."?Sabine Blaschke, *Comparative Labor Law Policy Journal* (Fall 2013) "Determining Democracy reports an impressive body of empirical research. An innovative research design (four

matched pairs of case studies) was used to study changes in the quality of employment systems in American and German call centres."--Tom Langford, *Labour/Le Travail* (April 2014) "In *Disintegrating Democracy at Work*, Virginia Doellgast compares the changes in the organization of frontline call center jobs in the United States and Germany. Doellgast conducted nearly three hundred interviews with key informants in both countries and compared the qualitative findings with the quantitative results of an international survey. This is an innovative book; there are not many internationally comparative studies on wages and work organization with such a broad empirical base and such a profound knowledge of institutions and the organization of an industry."?Gerhard Bosch, *Universitaet Duisburg Essen* "This unique and original book makes a major contribution to comparative industrial relations. It is a solid empirical analysis based in the growing service sector and examines a globally growing occupation, the call center customer service representative. Virginia Doellgast argues that both participation rights and union bargaining power are important supports for the adoption of high involvement employment systems."?Jeffrey H. Keefe, *Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey* About the Author Virginia Doellgast is Lecturer in Comparative Employment Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science.