

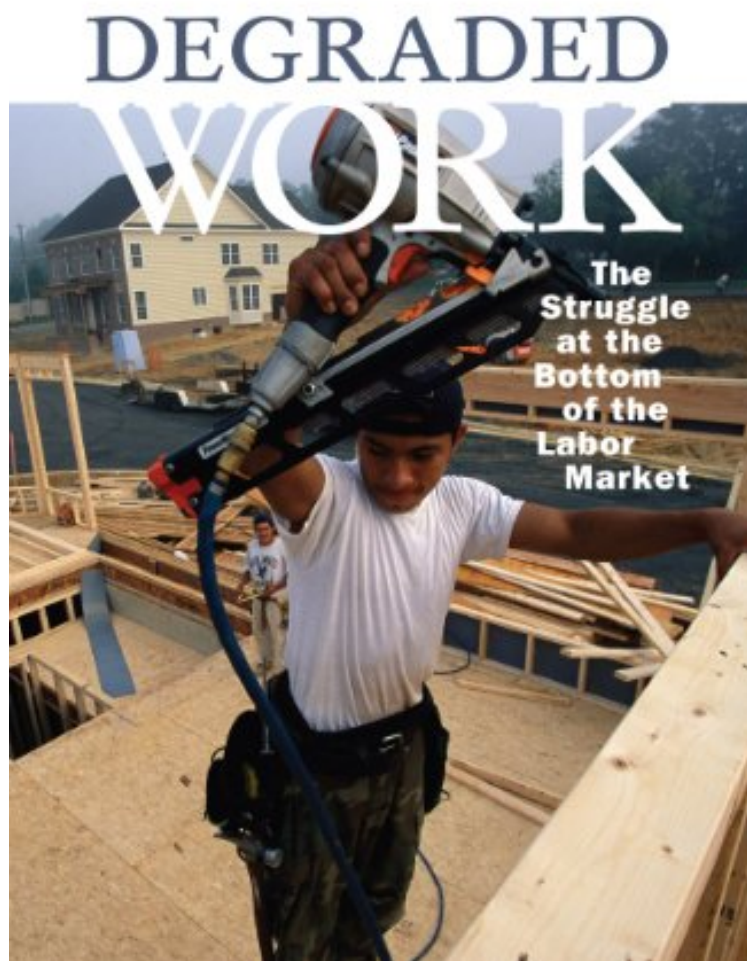
[Download] Degraded Work: The Struggle at the Bottom of the Labor Market

# Degraded Work: The Struggle at the Bottom of the Labor Market

*Marc Doussard*

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MARC DOUSSARD



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**Marc Doussard : Degraded Work: The Struggle at the Bottom of the Labor Market** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Degraded Work: The Struggle at the Bottom of the Labor Market:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Moving Beyond Conventional WisdomBy John "Degraded Work" is an ambitious attempt to debunk certain conventional wisdom about "place-bound, local serving industries" and the role they play in degrading the quality of jobs. Traditional views of economic growth and development--at least views commonly encountered in the United States--tend to look at export-oriented industries like manufacturing as

sophisticated, dynamic ones that offer good jobs, while local-serving industries like residential construction and retail are portrayed as static, competition-constrained industries that have no choice but to pay low wages and "sweat" their employees in order to survive. Through the use of in-depth case studies of two local serving industries (food retail and residential construction) in Chicago, the book shows how wrong the conventional thinking is. Overall, "Degraded Work" is a fresh take on a problem of great importance and it serves an important role in showing how degraded work is not a natural feature of service industries but rather a problem that is produced through human agency and so is a problem that can be addressed through human actions. (Note: the book's author is an acquaintance, and we share mutual friends.) 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Insightful, challenging and academically rigorous. By Wonkette Doussard starts off by compellingly challenging a lot of conventional economic development and labor markets theory. He moves on to examine (in great detail) the structure of the small-scale home renovation and independent grocery store sectors in Chicago, and how these structures influence the degraded work conditions of laborers. The author makes great use of both quantitative and qualitative evidence. It is information dense, but very readable for the genre. Definitely a must-read for anyone interested contemporary labor economics, immigration, and urban studies. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A necessary addition. By Jamaal Doussard offers a compelling and necessary refinement to local economic development and geography theory by disaggregating locally serving firms from traded sector firms. In isolating the unique attributes of these firms he offers a unique political economy of firms that takes structural position and spatial distribution explicitly into account, and gives the reader a way to not analyse the conditions of workers in these firms but also a brief array of policy and organizing approaches to addressing them. This is a must for economic geography, economic development, and urban planning specialists.

Critics on the left and the right typically agree that globalization, the loss of manufacturing jobs, and the expansion of the service sector have led to income inequality and rising numbers of low-paying jobs with poor working conditions. In *Degraded Work*, Marc Doussard demonstrates that this decline in wages and working conditions is anything but the unavoidable result of competitive economic forces. Rather, he makes the case that service sector and other local-serving employers have boosted profit with innovative practices to exploit workers, demeaning their jobs in new ways—denying safety equipment, fining workers for taking scheduled breaks, requiring unpaid overtime—that go far beyond wage cuts. Doussard asserts that the degradation of service work is a choice rather than an inevitability, and he outlines concrete steps that can be taken to help establish a fairer postindustrial labor market. Drawing on fieldwork in Chicago, *Degraded Work* examines changes in two industries in which inferior job quality is assumed to be intrinsic: residential construction and food retail. In both cases, Doussard shows how employers degraded working conditions as part of a successful and intricate strategy to increase profits. Arguing that a growing service sector does not have to mean growing inequality, Doussard proposes creative policy and organizing opportunities that workers and advocates can use to improve job quality despite the overwhelming barriers to national political action.

Marc Doussard posits a new interpretation of the 2001 to 2006 profit-wage disjuncture that is innovative and fresh. This is the stuff of truly innovative urban-economic analysis.—David Wilson, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign