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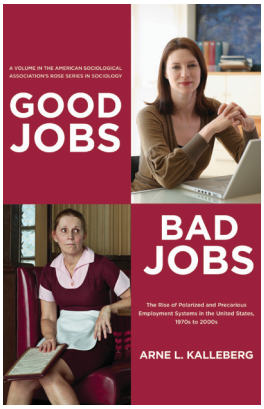

Tatiana Karabchuk

Bad Jobs as a Core Driver of Growing Social Inequality in the United States

Book Review: Kalleberg A. (2011) *Good Jobs, Bad Jobs: The Rise of Polarized and Precarious Employment Systems in the United States, 1970s to 2000s*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation[1].

KARABCHUK, Tatiana Sergeevna — Candidate of Sciences in Sociology, Deputy Director of Laboratory for Comparative Social Research, Senior Research Fellow of Laboratory for Studies in Economic Sociology, National Research University Higher School of Economics.
Address:
20 Myasnitskaya str., Moscow, 101000, Russian Federation.

Email: tkarabchuk@hse.ru

Abstract

This is a review of a masterpiece by a famous professor of labor sociology. Anyone looking for understanding current labor market processes needs to read this latest work by Arne L. Kalleberg, the Kenan Distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Kalleberg focuses on the US and shares his deep understanding of a wide range of social and economic mechanisms of the labor market under globalization. The book gives a vivid description of the current labor market and provides an explanation for the changes that brought about the rise of precarious employment. The book sheds light on the reasons for the dramatic increase in polarization and inequality between jobs and both between and within occupations. Kalleberg argues that the US is in dire need of a new social contract to tackle the challenges that arise from a globalized division of labor, widening polarization in the quality of jobs, and the proliferation of precarious work. An example of such a new social contract is a "flexicurity" system, aspects of which exist today in some countries. Kalleberg claims that only a coordinated effort by government, business and labor can address the sources and consequences of the polarization in job quality and that only such an effort will be able to improve both the economic competitiveness of the US and the quality of jobs and lives of American citizens. Though the book itself is focused on the American labor market during the last forty years, this review attempts to place Kalleberg's ideas into a global context.

Keywords: polarized labor market; precarious employment; bad jobs; good jobs; consequences of labor market segmentation; diversity of non-standard employment; United States.

Kalleberg's book, published in the prestigious Rose Series in Sociology, established in 1967 by a bequest to American Sociological Association, imparts a clear and deep understanding of internal labor market mechanisms in the US since the 1970s. Resulting from decades of labor market research, the book clearly substantiates the author's view of the current situation in the US labor market and its social system. The book educates the reader on the growth of the non-standard

[1] Winner of the 2012 Academy of Management's George R. Terry Book Award. Winner of the 2013 Best Book Award, Inequality, Poverty, and Mobility Section of the American Sociological Association.

employment sector, an important issue with relevance not only for the US but also for many other countries. In some European countries temporary employment currently makes up 25–30 percent of all jobs. This book should be required reading for labor economists or labor sociologists (or any other social scientist) who are interested in understanding the drivers of social inequality and labor market polarization.

The main focus of the book is to give a thorough description and explanation of the labor market changes that gave rise to polarized and precarious employment systems. The main conclusion of the book is that the US is in dire need of a new social contract to tackle the challenges of a global division of labor and growth of polarization and precarious work. Kalleberg envisions something he calls a "flexicurity system", elements of which are already in place in some countries, as an example of a new type of social contract. Although politically impossible to implement in the US in its present context, the author claims that only a coordinated effort on the part of government, business and labor can address the sources and consequences of the polarization in job quality and that only this type of effort can improve both the economic competitiveness of the US and the quality of jobs and lives of American citizens. Kalleberg begins with an explanation of the nature of work and job quality. The first part of the book focuses on changing work structures and workers, and the second part is devoted to a discussion of various types of inequality at work. The final part of the book discusses Kalleberg's proposal for addressing this inequality through social policy, describing the barriers that prevent a real national conversation on this issue, and the main challenges faced by policymakers.

Job Quality in the United States and All over the World

The US, similar to many other countries, has undergone market transformations, such as globalization and deregulation, that have increased the amount of competition faced by firms, provided greater opportunities for management to outsource work to lower-wage countries, and opened new sources of workers through immigration. More knowledge-intensive work, accompanied by technological progress, expansion of the service sector, greater diversification of the labor force, and shifts toward greater individualism at work, have all radically transformed employment relations and the nature of work in the US. These changes in work and the workforce have made the quality of employment problematic.

To help the reader to grasp the seriousness of the problem, Kalleberg begins the book with the premise that good jobs are important for any society. Workers who have job security and who have reasonable expectations regarding future job opportunities are more likely to put down roots in their community, raise children, buy a house and invest in family life and the future. Creating good jobs and avoiding bad jobs therefore ought to be considered major priorities because work is central to human welfare and the functioning of organizations and societies. Moreover, jobs are the main means through which individuals are linked to the economy and slotted into places within a system of social stratification. The author's broad approach toward this aspect of economy and society brings interest to the book not only for labor economists and sociologists but also for virtually any researcher in the social sciences.

After identifying the basic dimensions of job quality and laying out the difference between "good" and "bad" jobs, Kalleberg gives his perspective on the growing polarization in both economic and non-economic dimensions of job quality and makes the argument that this polarization is structural (not cyclical). He attributes this polarization to the growing mismatch between social and economic institutions and the changing nature of work and the labor force.

After a period of optimism in the 1960s–1970s, wages in the US remained stagnant for many people, though jobs became more pressured and demanding. Strikingly, low wages and job insecurity put many Americans at or below the poverty line during the period of high employment in the 1990s. In the 2000s, both academia and

the media paid attention to widespread and growing anxiety towards the scarcity of good jobs, i.e. jobs that paid a living wage, were relatively secure and could provide opportunities for advancement.

According to Kalleberg, the quality of a job depends heavily on: (1) economic compensation, such as earnings and fringe benefits; (2) the degree of job security and opportunities for advancement to better jobs; (3) the degree to which people are able to exercise control over their work activities and experience their jobs as interesting and meaningful; and (4) the extent to which people's time at work and control over their work schedules permit them to spend time with their families and in other non-work activities [Kalleberg 2012: 5].

Each job needs to be evaluated in each particular case, depending on personal perceptions and preferences. Kalleberg agrees that a person's work values and expectations are related to his/her gender, race, age, education, and work experience and to the cultural characteristics of the society in which the person lives. Considering all of the complexity of what constitutes a good job versus a bad job in a particular society and time period, the author provides a careful description of these two types of jobs in the US today. To my understanding, we can apply this criterion to evaluate a job in other countries as well, that is why this book is such a valuable contribution to the current discussion on decent jobs. This provides an alternate view to a discussion that has been dominated by International Labor Organization conventions. For example, to label a job as good or bad, it should meet the five criteria given in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of Good Jobs versus Bad Jobs

Good Jobs	Bad Jobs
Pays relatively high earnings, provides opportunities for increases in earnings	Pays low wages and does not lead to higher wages over time
Provides adequate fringe benefits (health insurance and retirement benefits)	Does not provide fringe benefits, such as health insurance and pension benefits
Enables the worker to have opportunities for autonomy and control over work activities	Does not enable the worker to exert control over the work activities
Gives worker some flexibility and control over scheduling and terms of employment	Does not provide the worker with flexibility to address non-work issues
Provides the worker with some control over the termination of the job	Does not give the worker some control over the termination of the job

Source: [Kalleberg 2012: 9–10].

Kalleberg emphasizes two aspects of the change in job quality. First, it has become very difficult to distinguish between good and bad jobs in the US based on their degree of security, as all jobs have become more precarious, or more risky, in terms of consequences of job loss and have become more insecure in general. Second, advancement opportunities have become increasingly important for people who have completed their formal education and have families to support. Whenever a job does not provide any real opportunities and does not offer any noneconomic and economic rewards in the future, it becomes a "dead-end" job.

Job quality and quality of life are already understood as important issues in Europe and are being discussed by the European Commission and OECD [OECD 2011; 2013]. For example, the European Foundation carries out a triennial survey of all European countries on "Quality of Job" and "Quality of Life" so that changes in job quality and their effects on individuals' well-being can be tracked. Similarly, the European Social Survey, taken every two years, collects data on both economic and noneconomic characteristics of jobs. These developments in Europe are not mentioned in the book, and in the US, no such data are collected that would allow one to examine changes in job quality over time.

Changing Work Structures and Workers as Main Reasons for the Decrease in Job Quality

Kalleberg describes two sets of factors that explain the lowering of job quality in the US: the structural and institutional contexts of work shaped by political and sociological forces and changes in the composition of the labor force. The former includes mechanisms for decision-making by employers, type of industry, collective agreements and occupational structures. The latter encompasses the needs and preferences of workers and how these affect the relationship between job characteristics and their own values, needs and expectations.

Kalleberg discusses the erosion of government regulations that set minimum acceptable standards in labor and argues that this has led to a shift in the balance of power away from workers and towards employers. Together with advances in technology, an increasingly market-driven approach under the banner of neoliberalism has forced companies to compete on a global stage. Short-term profit seeking has encouraged managers to treat labor as a variable rather than a fixed cost, leading to mass outsourcing and the growth of both temporary and other forms of precarious work.

Globalization and spatialization, increased price competition in product markets, expansion of the service sector, the changing role of capital markets in corporate governance, an ideological shift toward greater individualism, decline in the power of union, the growing distance between employers and workers, and the weakening of government intervention in the labor market are among the structural and institutional changes that have contributed to the proliferation of nonstandard work relations.

Institutional transformations have been accompanied by great changes in the composition of the labor force, which Kalleberg describes in detail. The proportion of women, migrants, those with a university diploma and dual-earner families grew dramatically, thus affecting the labor market. Women's labor force participation, particularly among married women with children, and those with educational qualification both increased. Nonetheless, employment has retained a gender bias, with men generally having better-quality jobs, higher wages and greater autonomy and control over their jobs. In addition, women are also three times more likely to work part-time than men are.

The increased value of education spurred greater polarization among workers. The importance of higher education became remarkable as the new minimum requirement for obtaining a good job. Though not discussed in the book, this tendency is also true for many European countries and for Russia: the first requirement for any white-collar position, including those in the service sector, is a university diploma. At the same time, more highly educated people demand a greater return from their job, not only in the form of wages but also in terms of increased autonomy and control of schedule, opportunities for growth and development, and other such characteristics related to job quality. Though it is true that more women currently participate in the labor market, not only in the US but also in many other western countries, during this same period of economic growth, the rate of women's labor force participation remained steady and very high, at approximately 70–80 percent of working age women, in countries of the former Soviet bloc. Kalleberg gives a convincing explanation for this from a socio-economic point of view; however, in doing so, he completely neglects the shift in human values. This global process of women's growing labor force participation could be explained by the spread of emancipative values and more egalitarian attitudes towards gender in many parts of the world [Welzel, Deutsch 2011; Welzel 2013].

Another interesting feature of the current labor market, as depicted by Kalleberg, is the increase of dual-earner couples among American families. The various reasons for the increase in women within the labor market are clear: higher divorce rates, the decline in the birth rate, increasing educational attainment among women, and the availability of jobs in the service sector and white-collar occupations. The stagnation of men's wages

has also made it difficult, if not impossible, for one breadwinner to support a family. I would like to draw the readers' attention to a specific feature of the Russian setting: the relatively low earnings of one spouse have been associated with the motivation of women to participate actively in the labor market. The impossibility of supporting a family, particularly families with several children, with the wages of one breadwinner further influenced the entrance of women into the working sphere [Sinyavskaya, Billingsley 2013]. At the same time, more and more women have become committed to their own careers and do not treat their job as a supplement to their husbands' income. However, in the US, work continues to be gendered in terms of quality of jobs: men generally have better jobs than women do. Females are often assigned to relatively low-paying jobs that do not provide much opportunity for advancement [Kalleberg 2012: 46].

Kalleberg lists migration among the reasons explaining the proliferation of precarious and low-paid jobs. The very high migration flows draw further parallels between the US and Russia, where the Russian labor market attracts millions of immigrants from Central Asian and neighboring countries. Bad jobs are encouraged by the flow of low-skilled migrants. Such jobs are low in rates of pay, insecure and lacking in any advancement opportunities.

The author arrives at three main conclusions about changes in the labor force. First, education drives a wedge between people with good jobs and people with bad jobs, i.e., education brings greater polarization in the workforce. Second, low rates of education in large portions of the US population, particularly minority groups within the US (nonwhites, the foreign-born, and older workers), allow employers to continuously create jobs with low payment that are generally of low quality. Finally, Kalleberg warns that exactly those countries that have the most liberal labor regulation, such as the US, have the highest incidence of low wages and generally low-quality jobs among its disadvantaged groups. It would therefore behoove those economists who advocate for liberalization of the labor market to keep this warning in mind.

Inequality in Job Quality

The author argues that the growth of inequality derives from the decline of an American middle class based on an abundance of relatively low-skill jobs that nevertheless offered relatively good pay and benefits, job stability and a path for advancement. The polarization between workers with good jobs and those with bad jobs increased due to the rising duality between primary and secondary labor markets. This argument is grounded in the theory of labor market segmentation posed by Doeringer, Piore, Doeringer and many others [Doeringer, Piore 1971; Piore 1978; Doeringer 1986]. Thus, the book is a logical continuation and development of this theory as an application of nonstandard work paradigm**.**

There are several dimensions of the polarity discussed by the author: (1) polarization within service industries, (2) polarization of the occupational structure, (3) polarization of organizations, (4) polarization of employment relations, and (5) polarization of workers. Kalleberg explicitly shows how exactly each of the aforementioned dimensions contributes to the general polarization in the US labor market.

The growth of precarious employment relations is a key issue that is discussed throughout Kalleberg's book, and job instability, nonstandard employment and perceived uncertainty are explained in Chapter 5. Job security and job stability have decreased in the United States since the 1970s. This conclusion is supported by evidence from a diverse range of indicators: the growth of nonstandard, market-mediated work arrangements; the decline in employer tenure; the increase in involuntary job loss rates for certain groups; the growth in the share of long-term unemployment; and the increases in uncertainty and insecurity in workers' perceptions. Consequently, all jobs are shown to have become more insecure and precarious. The very important conclusion of this chapter is that "the growth of insecurity has redefined the meaning of the psychological contract between employers and employees; it no longer points to an exchange of effort and loyalty for the promise of a secure job and future

advancement with the company" [Kalleberg 2012: 103]. This phenomenon has far-reaching consequences for greater inequalities and polarization.

The general increase in precarious work and job insecurity for all workers along with expanding polarization deepen the inequality even more. Competition for good jobs in light of decreased work security and increased nonstandard work arrangements centers on candidates' education and special skills. Due to differences in education, some workers are less (or more) vulnerable than others to bad jobs, whereas the labor force becomes increasingly polarized into those with more education and market skills and those without these human capital attributes [Hacker 2006; Kalleberg 2012].

The rise of precarious employment has negative effects on job quality, including earnings, control of autonomy at work and job satisfaction. Greater inequalities come from the growth of both well-compensated and poorly compensated jobs, coupled with a decline in middle class jobs. Earnings inequality associated with the gender gap, racial discrimination, skill-biased technical change, educational differences and occupational differences between jobs, and the decrease in opportunities for economic mobility each bring a lack of income growth to the middle class.

Jobs are polarized in terms of control over work activities and intrinsic rewards, which is another characteristic of job quality. Despite the limitations of the previous quantitative studies, the results suggest that there has been an expansion of opportunities for non-economic job rewards, such as the degree of control that workers have over their work activities, participation in decision-making and possibilities to find meaningful, challenging work that makes use of their skills.

At the same time, jobs have become more stressful and time demanding, with a considerable increase in working hours. Time is the key feature of job quality. Though the overall number of working hours increased in the US economy, the average working hours both for men and women stayed relatively stable between the 1970s and 2000s (43 hours for men and 37 hours for women). The proportion of those working part time (less than 30 hours per week) was to 8.6 percent for men and 19.6 percent for women in 2000. In Russia, for example, the rates for part-time employment is two times lower. A peculiarity of the American labor market is the overwhelming share of those who work more than 50 hours a week, working rates that can be considered 'overworking'. This phenomenon is widely discussed in the American literature [Schor 1991; Osterman, Kochan, Locke, Piore 2001; Jacobs, Gerson 2004]. Overworking and the intensity of work are both crucial problems in present US labor relations. Workers in both bad and good jobs are now working more intensely.

Growing polarization in the number of working hours often reflects the polarization between bad and good jobs. What is interesting to note is that those who have good jobs in terms of wage, advancement and autonomy are likely to work more hours than those who have relatively low-skill and poorly paid jobs. On the one hand, it seems fair that those who have more working hours have better remuneration, but on the other hand, it is unclear whether such a job is actually a good job if it does not allow a person to strike a successful balance between family and work. The growing needs of workers to have greater flexibility to take care of family and personal matters and the relatively slow changes in jobs and workplaces to meet these needs indicate a structural mismatch. It should be underlined that the majority of American workers still do not have access to flexible schedules.

It is thus very important to study job satisfaction to be able to trace this mismatch in labor relations and predict when employees will quit their jobs (and to predict possible strikes and social tensions in society) to adjust the jobs to meet the workers' needs. Work satisfaction is one of the main indicators of job quality that has successfully translated into statistical measurements. Job satisfaction is "an evaluative measure based on worker's perceptions of overall goodness of their jobs and their judgments about the quality of

their employment situation" [Kalleberg 2012: 164]. "The impact of particular job rewards on satisfaction are filtered through the subjective lens of one's work values or the importance that people place on various economics and noneconomic job rewards as well as their expectations" [Kalleberg 2012: 165]. Many scientists criticize this method of measuring job quality because job satisfaction is not a measure of objective quality of jobs. Nonetheless, job satisfaction forms the basis for workers' decision-making in relation to resignation, job changes and job training. For these reasons, it becomes important to understand workers' own perceptions of their current jobs. Such data are both valuable for employers and policy makers in the adjustment of labor market needs, understanding employees' demands for fair wage remuneration and good payments and addressing family-work conflicts. The value of such data is reflected in the European Value Survey of 2010, which included an additional block of questions devoted to job satisfaction and work characteristics that allow us to measure mismatches between the two.

There are two ways to measure job satisfaction: by direct question ("All in all, how are you satisfied with your job?") or by several questions to different job satisfaction items like satisfaction with wage, working hours, promotion opportunities, and work intensity. Kalleberg forms arguments on total job satisfaction using this second method (via regression on the items) (see Table 9.1: [Kalleberg 2012: 168]). To my mind, a better technique would be confirmatory factor analysis. Taking such an approach would allow for the calculation of the facto loadings of each items. Moreover, to speak about the determinants of job satisfaction, we should apply structural equation modeling to allow us to measure this latent variable of job satisfaction (measured by several items) while simultaneously considering the coefficients of the tested factors and controls for all other significant variables discussed in the book, such as gender, age, and cohorts. The overall level of job satisfaction in the American labor force has declined since the 1970s, with less evidence for growing polarization in job satisfaction [Kalleberg 2012: 176].

I fully agree with Arne Kalleberg that increases or decreases in job satisfaction over time can be interpreted as indicators of the growth or decline in the quality of jobs. I think that this measure is a very important indicator for the economy or particular industry or occupations (both for employers and policy makers of a country) because it can help trace changes and prevent massive strikes and social movements. I think in many transition countries and developing countries, there is a lack of information on this particular indicator. In the case of the European Union, regular Quality of Job surveys, as performed by the European Commission, allow for the measurement of job satisfaction and its items.

Growing precarious employment determines the overall decline in job satisfaction and subjective well-being, particularly in relation to involuntary temporary or part-time jobs. The lack of security in the precarious positions leads to decrease in job satisfaction as workers perceive their peer's jobs to be more secure and well-paying than their own [Kalleberg 2012: 170]. I would like to stress this conclusion for rigid labor markets where the labor market segmentation is more significant because those who hold periphery positions are aware of the existence of good and secure jobs in the primary sector. As a result, having an odd job in a rigid labor market leads to greater worker dissatisfaction than does having precarious work in a liberal labor market. That is what the evidence shows us in the comparative study on subjective well-being and employment type [Karabchuk, Soboleva, Nikitina 2014]. The global increase in precarity might thus have even more negative consequences for countries that have very rigid labor legislation, making it important not only to discuss but also to push forward the development of flexicurity systems and new social contract.

It is very important to stress that such polarized and precarious employment systems result from economic restructuring and that the removal of institutional protections is not merely a temporary feature of a self-

correcting business cycle. “The decline in the middle class and expansion of the very rich and very poor has resulted in the creation and maintenance of 'two Americas' that differ widely in their life chances and political attitudes and preferences” [Kalleberg 2012: 16] or in Freeman words “emerging apartheid economy” [Freeman 1997].

Challenges for Policy

There is no American exceptionalism in the described tendencies of growing polarization and precariousness because these processes have a global nature. All high- and low-income countries face similar pressures form intense globalization, technological advances, a greater mobility of capital and labor, new forms of organizational interdependence and weakened unions. In turn, these pressures affect the institutional frameworks governing employment relations.

Kalleberg begins the chapter on challenges for social policy by providing a brief and excellent summary of the changes in job quality in the US. That section serves as a concluding remark for the previously presented chapters on job quality. As one cannot find a specific conclusion section at the end of the book, it is slightly misleading; should a person read the whole book, he/she can find such conclusions at the beginning of Chapter 10. The author notes seven main changes that occurred in the US labor market within the last four years: (1) the growing polarization of the labor market and job quality has led to the increase in inequality in economic and noneconomic rewards; (2) precarious work and insecurity has increased overall; (3) many low-wage jobs have been created; (4) a substantial number of good jobs have been generated; (5) good jobs tend to have bad aspects in terms of longer working hours, stress and intensity; (6) there have been almost no changes in possibilities to combine family and work roles, and workers' needs for greater control over their work schedules grew faster than possibilities of balancing work and family life; and (7) differences in education and skill levels bring greater inequality and polarization to the labor market.

Following Appelbaum, Kalleberg concludes that it is exactly the absence of strong labor market institutions that has encouraged the growth of polarized and precarious employment systems in the United States [Kalleberg 2012: 17], as the existing “labor market institutions have been inadequate to protect workers’ interests” [Appelbaum 2010: 186]. Bad jobs constitute approximately 25 percent of total employment, which is a rather large proportion of the labor force. However, the book would benefit greatly from more discussion on the differences in the institutional background of the countries and the ways to adapt to the global changes mentioned above. The degree of polarization in the US labor market (with liberal labor regulations) in comparison to European labor markets (with much more strict employment legislation) remains unclear. As we know from the existing literature on Russia, Germany and Spain, very rigid labor legislation stimulates the extreme dualism of the core and periphery in the labor market, furthers polarization and leads to the expansion of temporary employment [Erlinghagen 2006; Hubler, Hubler 2006; Lechner, Wunsch 2006; Giesecke 2009; Gimpelson, Kapelyushnikov, Lukyanova 2010]. I would like to draw the readers’ attention to the fact that the share of temporary employment in such countries is much higher than that in America or UK (according to OECD data[2]. the shares of temporary employment in 2005 were 4.2 and 5.8 percent in the US and UK, whereas in Russia, Germany and Spain the rates were 12.2, 14.2 and 33.3 percent, respectively). The institutions should be compared in more detail, though possibly in another book.

Finally, the book points towards the need for a new social contract that will help address the growing polarization and precarious employment. It is worth noting that “polarization of work into either good or bad jobs, with little in between, is linked with the growing divergence in the other aspects of life, such as the decline of the middle class and the growing polarization of politics” [Kalleberg 2012: 182]. Using the example

2 OECD. Available at: http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=TEMP_I# (accessed 8 September 2014).

of "flexicurity" lessons from other countries, Kalleberg underlines the necessity of integrating employment and social policies and lays down challenges for American policy makers. The concept of flexicurity means to provide flexibility both to employer and employee while providing basic security to workers. I think that we should read more about the idea that we need to protect individual workers rather than try to protect the existing jobs. The idea is taken from the Danish example of addressing social policies to particular groups of workers and within the population while simultaneously freeing the employers' arms for different type of employee contracts and no firing costs.

While discussing a new social contract, Kalleberg describes the roles of three actors: government, business and labor. The government's role is considered to be creating economic security and providing a safety net, setting labor market standards, creating good jobs, control and socialization of immigrants and enhancing of education and training. The role of business and the role of labor are briefly described but require further emphasis with better empirical evidence. The main obstacles to implementing the new social contract could also be applied to Russia. The US and Russia are larger in geographical terms (in comparison with Denmark and Netherlands), so housing and transportation are more problematic issues when seeking to reallocate people from areas with job decline to locations where jobs are growing [Kalleberg 2012: 204]. Diverse and heterogeneous population, reliance on markets, spread individualistic values, economic instability and lack of confidence and trust in government are other obstacles to overcome on the way to this new social contract.

Overall, this book can be considered to be well backed-up with facts, logic and statistics. It warns against too much liberalization in labor relations, which can lead to dramatic consequences and extreme polarization and inequality with very rich and very poor employees and increasingly precarious employment.

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