

Service work in the 21st century

Postdoctoral thesis

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Summary

The digitalization of the world of work, brought about by technological developments, has given rise to changes in the established structures of the German labor market (Rinne and Zimmermann, 2016), and the increase in groups of migrants and refugees in employment will see them put under further pressure in the future. Although it is not the primary focus of the current debate on the “end of work” (see, for example, Bonin et. al., 2015; Matthes and Dengler, 2015; Frey and Osborne, 2013), these changes can also be observed in the service sector. Indeed, it is in “simple” service work that the effects of the processes of digitalization and immigration into the German labor market will be most greatly felt, with the established structures and working arrangements experiencing pressure from several angles. So far, this can primarily be perceived in the increased importance accorded to vocational training and qualifications (see Voss-Dahm et al., 2011).

The aim of this research is to investigate these structural changes and to conceive of them as a gradual institutional transformation (Thelen and Streek, 2005) of the existing arrangements and structures in the service sector. It is precisely because labor continues to occupy a prominent position in modern societies (see Schelsky, 1960), functioning as a decisive factor in social integration, that it is vital that perceptible changes in employment structures and arrangements in the service sector are also viewed as a process of societal transformation that has significant social consequences, and that it is analyzed accordingly.

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