

The Neoliberal Infrastructure of AI:

Platform Capitalism and Digital Labor in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

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I examine how neoliberal ideology shaped artificial intelligence development through platform capitalism and digital labor markets, focusing on Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT) as a paradigmatic case. Building on Matteo Pasquinelli's analysis of AI's material conditions and recent critiques of platform capitalism, I investigate how microtask platforms embody neoliberalism's transformation of labor into algorithmically managed commodities while enabling the rapid development of AI technologies. My analysis centers on three interconnected dimensions of AMT's role in AI development. I examine how AMT pioneered a model of labor organization that fragments complex cognitive tasks into micropayments, creating a global precariat of digital workers essential for AI development. This model exemplifies neoliberal principles of labor flexibility, minimal regulation, and global wage arbitrage. Through a detailed analysis of AMT's task marketplace, I demonstrate how this infrastructure creates digital assembly lines where workers lack traditional labor protections while providing essential services for AI development. I analyze how AMT's "artificial artificial intelligence" infrastructure enables tech companies to obscure human labor behind algorithmic interfaces. This technological mystification reinforces narratives of autonomous AI while depending on an underpaid workforce for everything from data labeling to content moderation. Through these analyses, I reveal how this hidden labor force becomes essential yet invisible in developing AI systems. I also investigate how AMT's model has increased across the AI industry, establishing new forms of algorithmic control over labor. This includes examining how major AI companies utilize similar microtask platforms for training data creation, model evaluation, and content moderation. The research demonstrates how these platforms reproduce neoliberal patterns of exploitation while enabling the myth of autonomous AI systems. The study contributes to our understanding of AI's material infrastructure by revealing how digital labor platforms like AMT are essential yet overlooked components of AI development. By exposing the human labor hidden behind supposed AI automation, I challenge dominant narratives about AI's autonomy while highlighting the need for labor protections in digital workplaces. The research concludes by exploring how understanding this labor infrastructure could inform efforts to improve working conditions in AI development and ensure a fairer distribution of AI's benefits. This investigation reveals how neoliberal ideology shapes the visible aspects of AI

development and its hidden human infrastructure. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing more equitable approaches to AI governance and ensuring that technological advancement does not come at the cost of worker exploitation.

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