

Platform Extractivism

Data Work and the People Powering Artificial Intelligence

Concealed behind digital platforms, a vast, dispersed, and largely invisible workforce quietly generates and annotates the data that powers today's AI boom. In Platform Extractivism, information scientist Julián Posada argues that these platforms are engines of extraction rooted in the enduring social inequalities and transnational power disparities of coloniality. Posada reveals that technology, especially today's so-called AI, is not artificial, autonomous, or intelligent; it inherently relies on and extracts from humanity. Drawing on mixed-methods research on three platforms in the Venezuelan data work sector, Posada exposes the human cost of this technology, revealing how digital platforms have capitalized on economic instability, targeting vulnerable populations to extract value from their precarious labor. A critical intervention in the debate on the future of work, this book provides profound insight into the implications of artificial intelligence and moves beyond the context of advanced economies to focus on the labor involved in its production. Platform Extractivism questions whether AI is a tool for freedom or a motor driving the widening the gap between the unseen workers who teach machines and the corporations that profit from them.

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