Inclusion and Technology Design
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Lecture - 12
Digital Labour, platforms, and the future of work

So, hello everybody. I am my name is Dr. Jamie woodcock, and I am basically Oxford Internet Institute. And I am very pleased as you (Refer Time: 00:25) comes to part to be, and to be able to speak to this school. I am going to talk about today and it is digital labour platforms, how digital work is changing, and probably it be the part of future of work and as well. I am going to talking a little bit about a projects.

I am learning with Prof. Mark (Refer Time: 00:46), my colleague at the Oxford Internet Institute and some field work what are we going to be doing in Bangalore as well.

What I thought, I would say we talk for a while at least some time for discussion at the end, if anybody has any questions or comments regarding through, you know I think you requires (Refer Time: 01:07) with comments or questions as well.
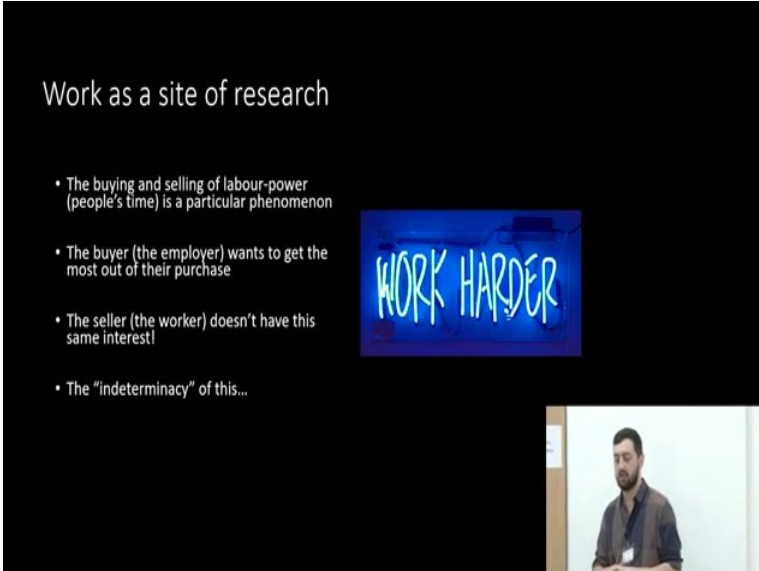
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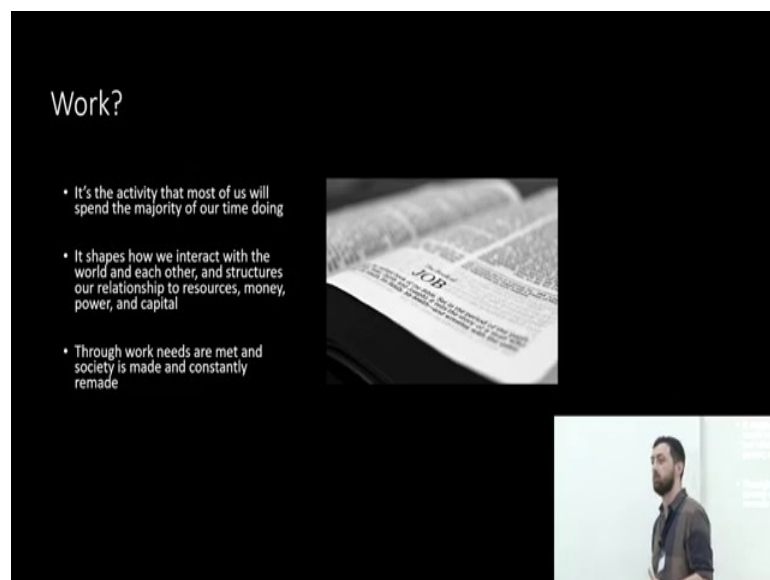
So, what I am going to start with is why I think work is important to talk about. Now partly I think work is important to talk about, because I am a sociologist with work, so

that is what I struggle something (Refer Time: 01:23) it is really important. And but I also think it is important when we think about how most of us are going to have to spend most of our lives working unless you worked out some wonderful plan (Refer Time: 01:37) hope you know. Having to do most of you going to have to work from (Refer Time: 01:39). It shapes how we interact with the world, how interacts with each other and structures, our relationships to various resources through money, through power, through capital.

And so when we try to understand societal changes, try understand the role of technologies, a change in society, what gives us one way to access, because it is do work hopefully I need a man who are often people needs to not increasingly not being through work. But it is also how society is constantly made and remade. Think about how you got to triple IT being together, we can also have different kinds of work in different work place you relied upon so be here, think about the workers required to make triple IT to be run on a day-to-day basis. Now, all of those kinds of work allow us to sit here, and talk about work in more abstractly ok.

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And what I think work is interesting as a site of research and this is something I was come back to when talking about platforms, you know if you talk about something on the scale of labour, I think it is always important to come back to the particular piece of work from itself. So, what is work? So, work is the buying and selling of labour-power

or people's time, no matter whether you working in a university, working for Uber, in you were software developer or cleaner, there is still something common to that relationship, which is somebody is buying your time. Now, the buying and selling of time is a very particular phenomenon.

The buyer, whether it is the Uber or (Refer Time: 03:27) employer, all is wants to get the most out of that purchase they can. Think about my job in Oxford University, once they bought my time, they want me to write papers, they want me to teach students that to do the all the other things that academics are meant to do. But thinking about the seller, it is only my interest to write a 1000 papers a year or to spend all of my time teaching.

And, and so there is always that tension, how much is somebody going to get out of the time they bought from somebody else. How many of thing, there is the factory work you are going to make, how many square feet is a cleaner going to clean? And so the reason I want to talk about if this there is always an indeterminacy at work.

There is always an ambiguity when someone's time is poor, how is it going to convert into profit or where from you or whatever works. And for platforms this relationship can be different, and be different other ways of doing it, but ultimately these problems of work still remain common across all different kinds of work.

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So, here is a couple of examples of different kinds of work, but what I want to talk about in this talk is digital labour. And, and what I mean by this in a sense is two different things. So, the first is new kinds of online work. And I always use the example of my grand dad to make sense of this. As my granddad would have no idea what online freelancing is, he just would not understand there is a concepts.

He never had a mobile phone, he tried to never use computers if possible. And so, he just would not understand what online freelancing is. It is a very new kind of work. Software developer, graphic design on computers, this is a kind of new forms of work. Well what my granddad would have understood very well partly, because he liked getting them rather than taking the tube in London is he to understand things like platform taxies. It understand those traditional kinds of work that have become digitalized, you know he had takeaways delivered to his house, he took taxis from place to place.

However, he probably would have refused to every time like (Refer Time: 05:48) take an Uber, and he preferred calling a taxi ok. So, we think about the digital labor. We can think about these two different kinds of work, newly created forms of digital work, and other kinds of work that have been transformed through digitalization.
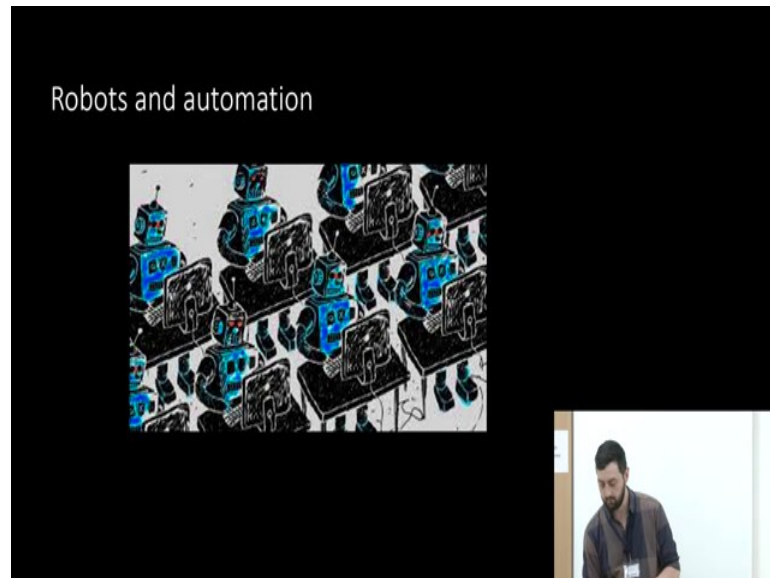
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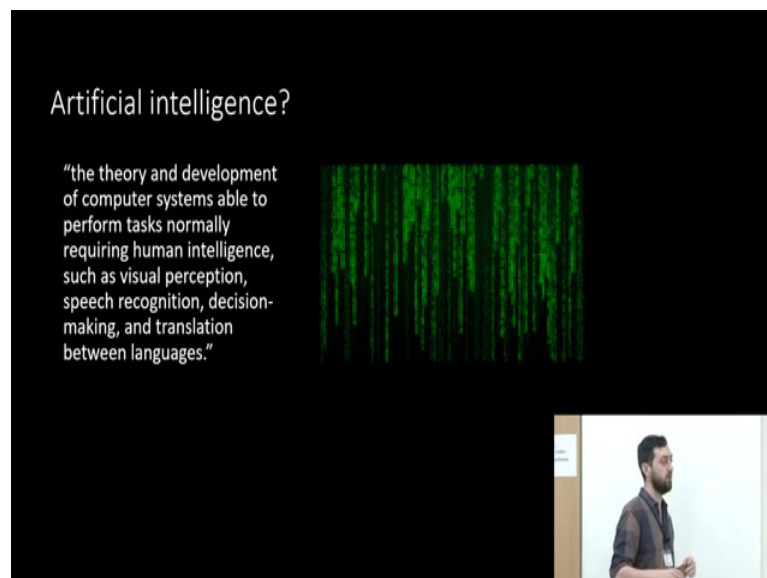
What I want to talk about are two things that I want to bring up and then be quite critical about throughout the talk. So, the first is artificial intelligence. And in the background of a lot of digital labour, digital labour platforms is this idea that were on the cusp of huge

changes due to artificial intelligence. But many of these tasks can be done purely by computer. We have Uber now, but artificial intelligence will drive Uber cars and get rid of taxi drivers in the future. There we might have people do an image recognition on platforms, but the computers are going to develop a way to do this without any human input.

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And really what this is a kind of longer version of the argument about automation that were on the cusp of major job loss. But these new kinds of work are going to be replaced along with huge sways of traditional employment.
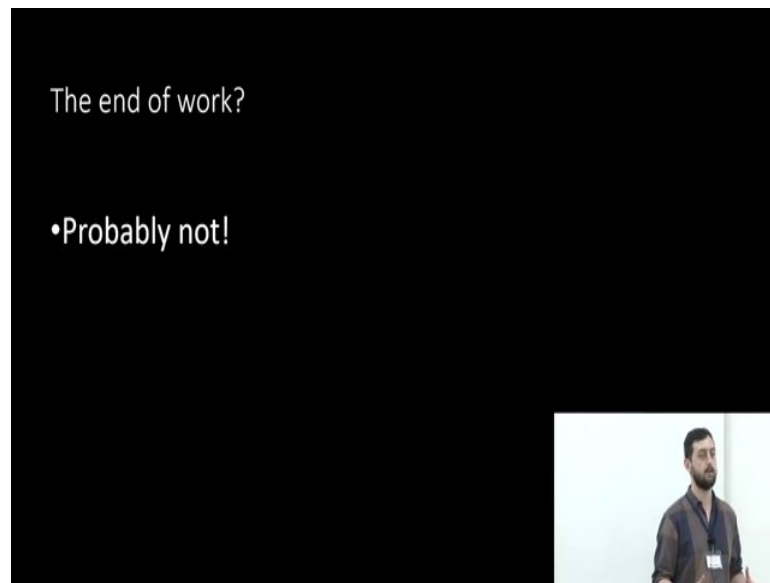
And the way I want to address this is to think about what it would mean if work endings tomorrow. And as I said earlier, you are probably going to have to work for all of your life and most of your life, and you must come up with a great problem, a great solutions to that. But at the same time and a lot of the press we hear that that is going to be mass unemployment through automation, this thing be huge job loss that is something we might get to do other things in work.

So, I mean the way I want to address this is (Refer Time: 07:41) the end of work likely well probably not a capitalism needs people to work.
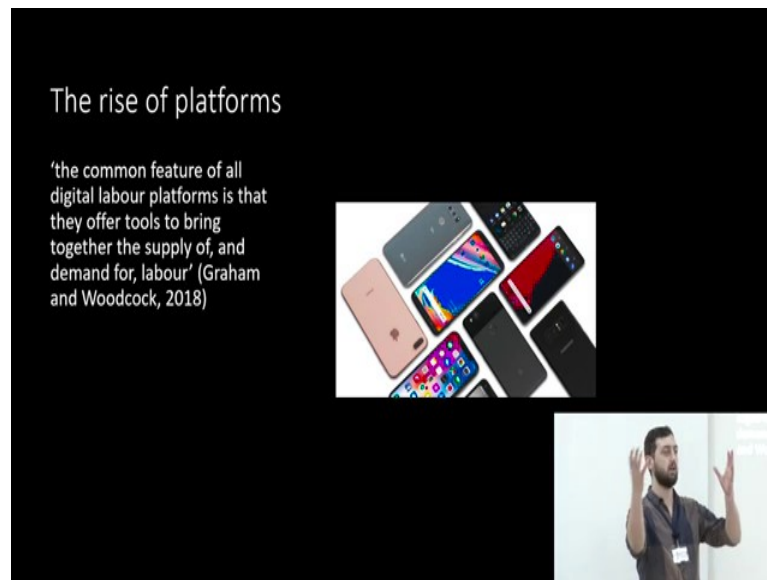
And so rather than mass job loss of unemployment of was getting to spend time doing things, we actually want to do rather than work is the reality is that whenever there is a mass technological would change under capitalism, it may get rid of a sector of jobs, but rather than those job disappearing forever people tend to move into other forms of employment. And I am always think about a part of the UK, when my grandparents are from, which used to be a major shipbuilding town. (Refer Time: 08:26), where steel ships were made, where coals mined, you know kind of entire generations working building ships and so on.
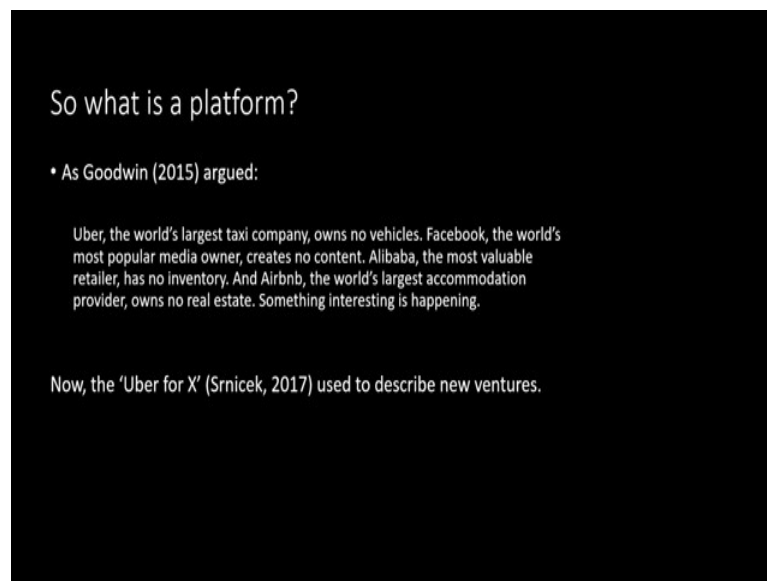
Now, you might there is (Refer Time: 08:35), but we do not build ships in the UK anymore, and this kind of industries completely collapsed. It does not mean that people they have no jobs in it. It just means they do a very, very different things now. And so for many people who used to work in the shipping industry, they are now working call centres. And, and in many cases there is a direct switch from the old warehouses in the shipping industry, in the coal industry to then being filled with cool senses. So, you have a kind of almost direct switch from manufacturing to service work.

And so one other things I want to argue is that platforms or the device of platforms shows, it actually this kind of work is not disappearing, but rather more and more people are entering into these kinds of precarious employment relationships and then they are not going away. And when we talk about platforms, you know there is a whole number

that we could talk about different kinds in various ways for work, I am interested in, in this talk is to talk about platforms, they share common features as digital labour platforms, but they offer tools to bring together the supply of and demand for labour. So, not platforms where you might be able to sell something or we might have to get accommodation, but platforms that brings together the supply of and demand for labour work platforms essentially.

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So what is a platform?

- As Goodwin (2015) argued:

Uber, the world's largest taxi company, owns no vehicles. Facebook, the world's most popular media owner, creates no content. Alibaba, the most valuable retailer, has no inventory. And Airbnb, the world's largest accommodation provider, owns no real estate. Something interesting is happening.

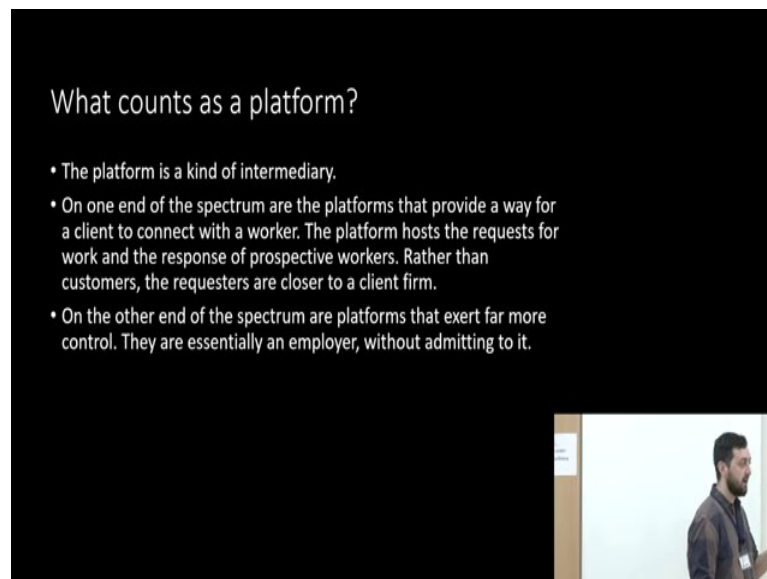Now, the 'Uber for X' (Srnicek, 2017) used to describe new ventures.

And people might be familiar with this quote from Goodwin about the significance of platforms. Now, I think it is worth returning to a little bit, but the Uber, the world's largest taxi company owns no vehicles. Facebook, the world's most popular media owner, creates no content. Alibaba, most valuable retailer, has no inventory. And Airbnb, the world's largest accommodation provider, owns no real estate that is all we were talking about platforms. This is what we are talking about intermediary companies. But (Refer Time: 10:45) remains the over the supply and demand for the labor whereas others are doing something quite different.

Now, of course one of the unmentioned companies in this list is Amazon which does on a lot of things, has a huge logistics network, a huge network of servers and data storage. So, (Refer Time: 11:10), they are learning a thing, there are companies that do and have a huge control (Refer Time: 11:18).

And my colleague Nick, so he check was I have used that Uber has become so widespread that it is even become the go to way of describing these new companies. The Uber for x, so if some startup founder is proposing a platform to connect people, who want to walk dogs with dogs that need walking or whatever kind of wonderful news problem were solving, you can tell well you know this is the Uber dog walking. So, the Uber also delivering frozen water or whatever new thing people are do not getting. And I think this is quite significant, because it shows how much of a modern this has become.

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So, what counts as a platform? One argues that a platform is a kind of intermediary. But when we think about work platform, there is a whole spectrum of different platforms we could think about. At one end of that platform, there the spectrum of platforms, there are platforms that provide a kind of online marketplace to work, they provide a way for clients to connect with workers, they host the request for work and the response of perspective works rather than customers the requesters become closer to a client might beautiful work there is not so much control on the path.

Now, the other end of the spectrum there are platforms that exert far more control over workers. Think about Uber, Ola, Swiggy, Zomato, these are essentially employers, but using the platform model as a way to free themselves from most of the responsibilities of being employed. Now, of course, across that spectrum, there are a whole variety of different forms. So, we get some platforms that exert a little bit more, control a little bit

less. And in countries where workers are challenging platforms on the self-employment status, we find that companies begin moving further away from control you know claiming that they do not exert controls to prevent than having it to become influence.

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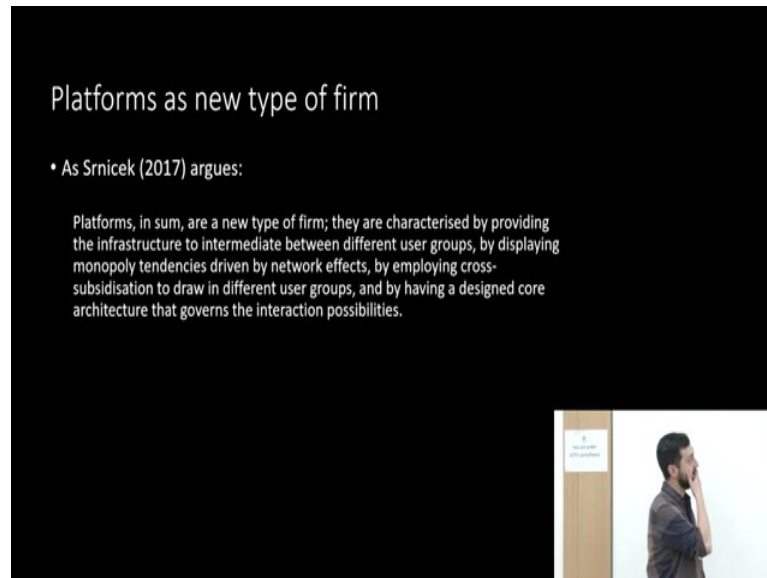
And so we can say that if Srineck does the platforms were a new kind of firms. Platforms in some are a new type of firm; they are characterized by providing the infrastructure to intermediate between different user groups. So, thinking about Uber as an intermediary between people who want taxis and people who have a car to drive people around.

They display monopolistic tendencies driven by network effects. Think about how with Uber it make sense to have as many drivers on the platform as possible, because then customers can get cabs more easily and so on. By employing cross subsidization to join different user groups in many cases services can be offered far cheaper than it could be before.

And by having a design core architecture that governs the interaction possibility, think here about the way Uber extracts data from its drivers. Think about how a delivery companies you convince somebody to deliver food by only telling them one step ahead where they need to go. If you have worked for delivery, big delivery company in the UK, your are never told this real cycle is going to be 5 miles or 10 miles you only ever told the next step (Refer Time: 14:58) that far I do not mind to go thinking about food.

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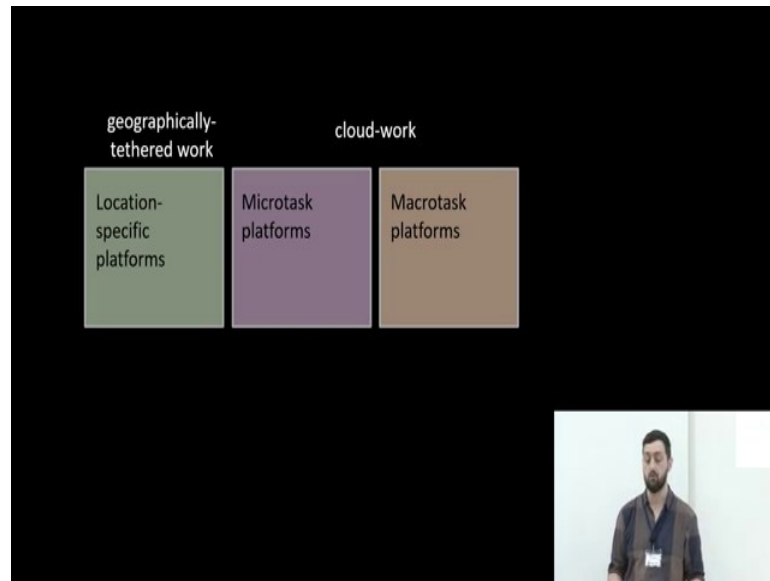
And so what I want to talk about now is another distinction in the kinds of platforms. So, I think broadly speaking, there are three different kinds of work platforms we can talk about. And they can be divided into two.

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So, the first are platforms that require workers to be in a particular place. Think about how if you are sat in Bangalore and you want to taxi, you want that taxi driver to be relatively near in Bangalore. You cannot order a taxi from London. Think about how the same as true with your pizza delivery, with having your house cleaned, with having care

work, carried out and import to work to be in a particular place. Now, often with these kinds of platforms, all of these kinds of work have existed before to use my maybe overused, but in this presentation example of my granddad, he would have known what all of these kinds of work, but you know he probably would have paid for these kinds of work.

The difference here is that the work process is now organized via the internet probably through an app. And we can think about the big examples of pattern work here. Now, of course, and I am going to get into this a little bit more later this means that workers have to be in the same place. It often means that workers have to be in the same place together, and means that workers on platforms might know each other which is a significant difference to the next kind of work.

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So, broadly speaking the other kind of platform work is what we could to use an overused metaphor, again I guess this cloud work. So, thinking here about work that is organized digitally over the internet with workers completing the tasks remotely. Unlike your pizza or your taxi, it does not matter where the person who completes your graphic design tasks or data into the task. It does not matter where they live so long as they have an internet connection.

And within this the shorter tasks micro work we could call it like Amazon Mechanical Turk, image recognition, data entry, transcription usually tasks that are very short or

tasks that can be broken down from a larger piece of work into very short task. And if anybody is not familiar with what I mean think about the capture tasks, these sometimes have to complete when you are putting your details into the internet. Now, it is kind of annoying when we have to do a capture at least I find it annoying because I am rather not be doing small, but it work to get access to my data.

But then you imagine if you had to do those over and over again for that is the kind of work that my coworkers are doing. And in a sense it comes out of this idea that you can get people to completely short tasks with no training. People are much, much better at recognizing numbers and words and so on. Then algorithms and require relatively little education. And a friend of mine who is an artists are collected every single capture he would ever done through Google and printed them out into a series of books. And the books will (Refer Time: 18:35). And he sell them to Google, and says this is how much work are completed free, and I am really enjoyed doing it and so on.

But I would like you to pay me this is my invoice. And unfortunately Google have never paid him for this he now takes these books around to art shows and lays them out showing all the transcription, he is done image recognitions. And the second kind of work is macro work to larger freelance tasks. And we can think here about platform type Upwork and things like graphic design, software development and so on, longer tasks that might require more interaction with the customer. But again it can be completed broadly speaking from anywhere.

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Now, when we think about these kinds of work, and how they have been merged in important, we have to think about the context from which they come. Now, clearly technology plays a role I have been very difficult to manage a platform like Uber on an international scale without the kinds of technology that it uses. But we also need to think about these platforms is how many people are currently seeking work globally, how many people are in informal work or underemployed, and are trying to gain access to labour markets in various ways.

And so we can do fieldwork recently in South Africa and I am ask them too few works in Uganda, Kenya, Uganda and various other African countries in everywhere you go you see signs like this. And adverts for jobs and increasingly these are the scenario on the factory workers and so on, but on you can earn money online, on the way here from central Bangalore so adverts for earning money on your (Refer Time: 20:39), earning money from (Refer Time: 20:41) online, these kinds of adverts becoming more and more ubiquitous.

And so for many people finding work on a global scale is becoming less about going to a workplace, having a direct boss, and is more about going through these kinds of places going through an internet cafe finding ways is access work online outside of the local labor market conditions.

And so one of the things we can said is that the world is increasingly defined by increasing connectivity. Earlier this year for the first time in human history over half of the world had regular access to the internet. This is a huge shifts in how people interact

with each other and (Refer Time: 21:39). However, it is still worth noting that even if over half the world have regular access to the internet that still means that just under half the world done have regular access to the internet.

And it is also worth thinking about how that connectivity is differentiates, think about how all of you access the internet, but then think about how people who do not own a computer (Refer Time: 22:04). Think about the different cost to get online how regularly what kind of experience you have of mind. And with the Uber drivers we spoke to in South Africa many of them as much as 20 percent of their income on data and which compared to London is 5, 6 and 8 times is much (Refer Time: 22:27) income to be able to be online.

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And so thinking about those differences in connectivity is still very poor. And so for many people finding work online, it is not sitting in a café, drinking flat white soup, (Refer Time: 22:45) working macbook which is often the imagery given in the UK online work is more like. Experience is much more like this working in a what is essentially a kind of factory, a car work factory whereas the computers most of them second hands and the global north. This is in Northern Kenya people accessing the internet and completing those kinds of tasks that we do want me to capture. So, completing sure image recognition tasks.

And what is interesting about this is many people so does anybody know when you look at an image and a capture, and you have to say identify the car in this picture identify the person do you know what you are doing when you do that the capture. Yeah?

Student: Actually when you when you are trying to verify (Refer Time: 23:38) basically I am just trying to so it make you identify the more numbers of cars right do that (Refer Time: 23:48).

Yeah.

Student: So, basically the (Refer Time: 23:51) up to see it and work maintain here.

Yeah and so what we are doing things about cars so the identify the car identify the person (Refer Time: 23:55) what your are training.

Student: And so (Refer Time: 24:02).

And what is your job recognition for.

Student: Recognition driving cars (Refer Time: 24:10).

Driving cars, self-driving cars is what you are doing essentially, is you are training algorithms that can help a self-driving car know whether something is a risk on a rider. And if you do remembers and so on it tends to be identify things on Google maps yeah. So, Google maps knows what it is, but when you are looking at images it saying this is a small child you are essentially trying to help the self-driving car I realize that it should not run over because it is a small child (Refer Time: 24:36).

Now, what is interesting about this is we might know this you know if we have an interest academically and understanding these things, but if you talk so people who work in these kind of crowd work factories, and you say what are you doing. And so I am looking at pictures and I am saying what is in them. It is ok. Do you know what you are doing that for is of course happen would you tell me why I am doing this I just do this meaningless tasks over and over and over again, and I get back.

And so the reason I want to bring this up is to think about how (Refer Time: 25:08), this kind of work is. You know when we are revising for our exams or we are writing papers or whatever we are doing, we have a sense of what that work is building to us I mean

hopefully with the revision is so (Refer Time: 25:22) better mark and so on. But usually at work we have a sense of what we are doing. Whereas, if you are doing this kind of work, you will never explain what the (Refer Time: 25:31) context is. And so one of the things that Mark when we do the field work is, so workers doing is looking at aerial pictures and identifying in the image with an arrow which direction people were running me.

Now, a and of course, we can say this for certain because the people will organized the crowd work factory would not tell you, but there were earlier few users for identifying which direction somebody is running in an (Refer Time: 26:06).

Student: (Refer Time: 26:08).

I mean perhaps it is to drop food packages. So, they land at peoples feet when they were running away from something, but more likely it is for (Refer Time: 26:18). And so many people are engaged in work that if you told lots of people, we want you to help train an algorithm that is going to bomb villages and kill people, people would say, (Refer Time: 26:29) what its useful people end up working in all manner of things that they might not otherwise have chosen to do.

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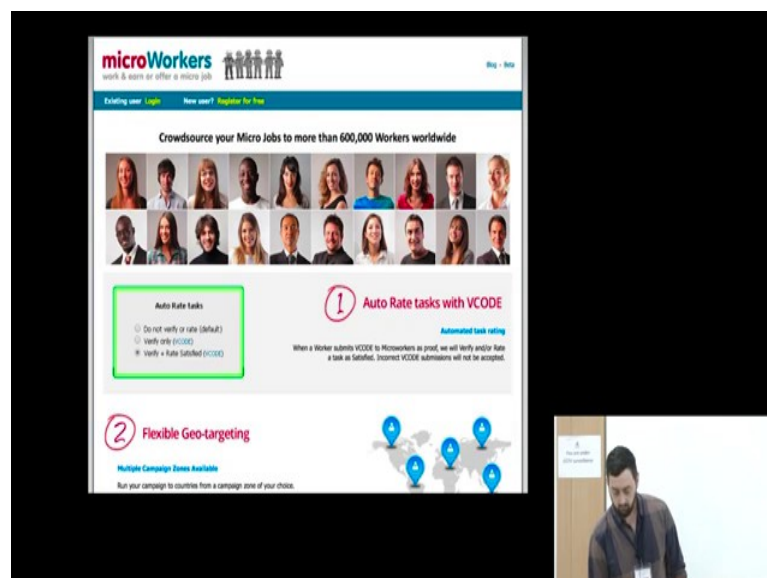
And so many of these websites we see how the intermediary faces the requester on one hand, and the worker on the other hand in very, very different ways. If you have the pay

in on Amazon Mechanical Turk, micro workers, this (Refer Time: 26:59) by they often advertise themselves to employers as we have this huge workforce on demand, you know they are skilled, they are fast workers, you know you can get the work completed very quickly.

Well, one of the ways they ensure this is the case is there is no if you are not happy with the work, you do not have to pay for it and. So, this is often been a way of convincing companies that it is to outsource your work to an anonymous crowd of workers. And so for example, on Amazon Mechanical Turk if we decide to outsource to transcription from (Refer Time: 27:39) or something like that Amazon Mechanical Turk, and we get the it is back we are not active with it and if you say I am not you know pay for this.

I know this make much standard and Amazon say that is true you know that should choice to do and the work has no way to appeal this, and so it has been estimated that on Amazon Mechanical Turk around 20 sometimes 25 percent of the work is unpaid. So, people complete work and the request that says I am not happy with this.

Now, we can see this in three ways. We can say maybe the work is not always up to scratch. Some of the fellow that is not work is not much scratch though or we capable more cynical have perhaps companies know that they cannot pay for the work and build this into how they pay for it. So, they do not pay for with the task. And so in reality what happens on a lot of these platforms is something that we would commonly understand as wage theft, employing people, not paying them for their work becomes institutionalized into the platform. So, people who are relying on this income end up seeing an overall you know weekly income or whatever it is dropped by 20 percent (Refer Time: 28:53).
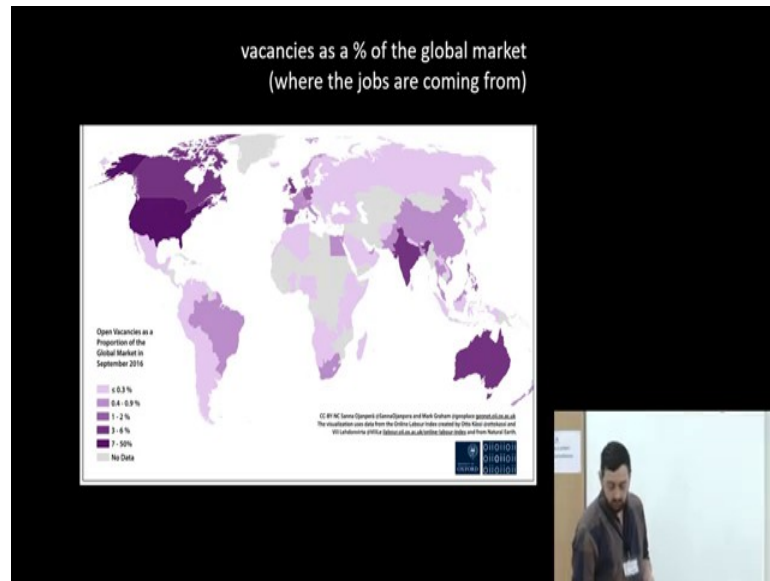
And so when we look at this on a global scale, you might not be surprised to see where the work is pay in globally say. And often the work patterns follow traditional lines of imperialism, work paying sent out from the UK and from Western Europe, North America to the global south to be completes a with huge numbers of crowd sourcing workers in India and Bangladesh and the Philippines in South Africa and America. And most of the work coming from the global north.

And one of the things (Refer Time: 29:42) want to pick out from this. And so this is some types of the my colleague mark has gathered from one of the big online platforms is which shows how many potential workers there are on a platform. And so in this platform, the potential global workforce is almost 1.8 million people. So, this is people who have performs on the website, who are looking for work. But I found over a short period website, so only 200000 people actually found the work on the platform. So, this means there is a relative oversupply of almost 1.6 million people, this is people who looked for work, maybe they applied for jobs, but they did not receive any paid work.

And if you can see the country by country basis, some of the differences between the potential workforce and the successful workforce is huge. In the Philippines for example, two hundred and twenty thousand peoples trying for work only 32000 people actually found in work. And so across this platform, you have people are in competing to be successful.

So, if you are working in the Philippines and there are that many other workers bidding for work, it might then make sense to reduce your price; within if there are this many people in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa are also I competing for work; if the cost of living is lower in your country, it might make sense to decrease your price even a bit more. And so may end up with is this huge oversupply at like a online drives down the amount of money that people receive for the work, which means people increasingly less and less when it is kind of whole thing.
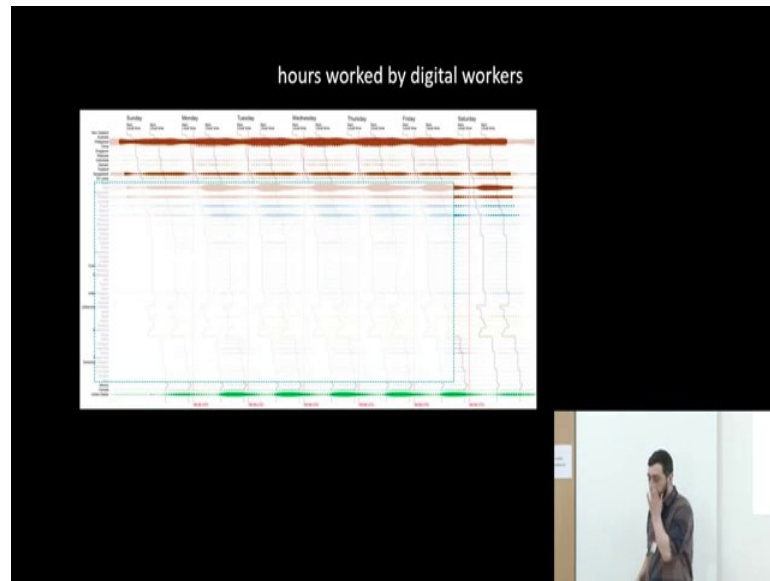
One of the other things that happens with this work is that if you are completing tasks in the Philippines for American companies, you need to be online in a way at the time an American workers are working on. And so this probably is very clear, this is a fine diary and essentially what its showing is a work here; shifting their work patterns to match American companies, because when Americans come online and start posting work if you are asleep you are not going to get that work.

And so not only is online work we shaping patterns of work on a global level, it is also reshaping how people work; what times they work and adding us extra demands to this form of work.

"Most people, most Filipinos, they work for 50 cents. It's so embarrassing. You're a professional. You know how to do this job... She just wants to get a job. It's really affecting those ones that know how to do the job"

- Oluwa – Nigerian worker
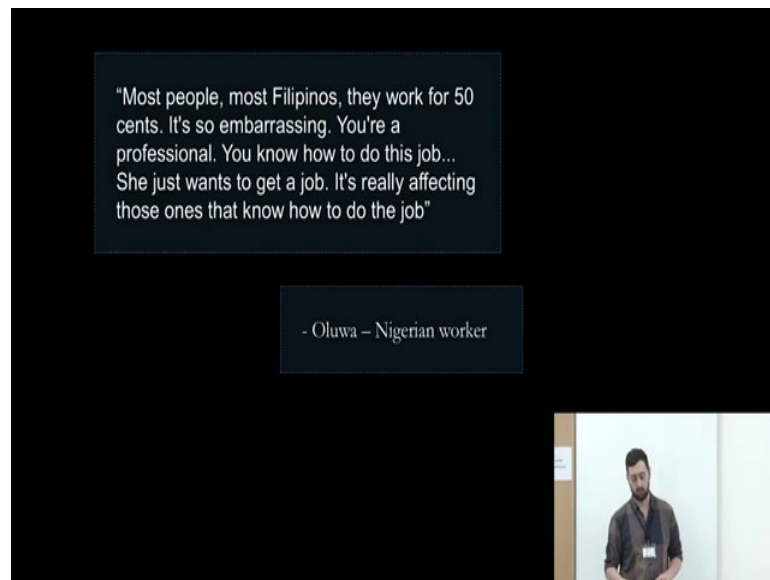
So, what I am going to do now is just to show a couple of quotes from field work about experience of this network. Now, I am now the first from a Nigerian worker, so the most people most Filipinos, they work for 50 cents. It is so embarrassing; you are a professional, you know how to do this job and she just wants to get a job, it is really affecting the earliest ones that know how to do the job.

And so what you see here is the Nigerian worker, who traditionally has worked for more than a Filipino worker and more of a wage, is feeling undercut by Filipino workers is no longer able to earn the living there previously. But of course, rather than complaining about the American request of is putting network on, there saying that the problem is the Filipino workers is also trying to find working on that. Now, so this kind of online work creates new divisions and competitions between different kinds of workers.

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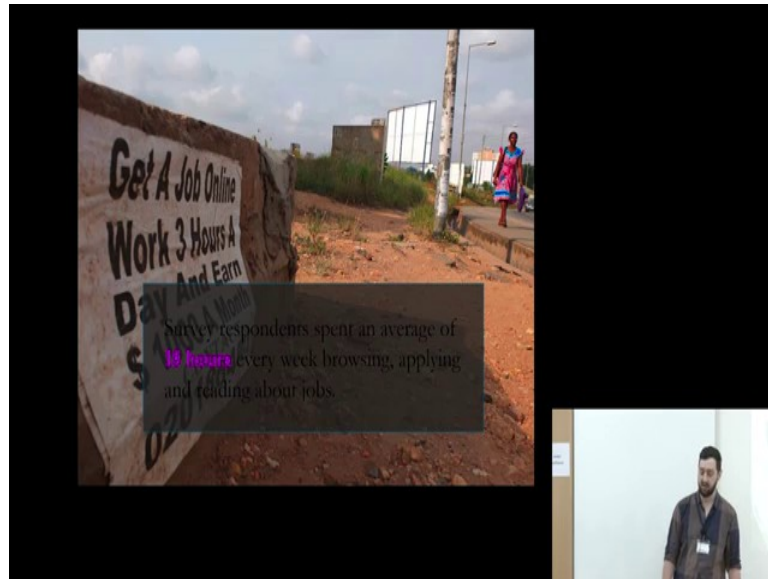
And what we found. So, this is (Refer Time: 33:44) is this survey respondents that we spoke to lose tons of platforms. Spend an average of 18 hours a week browsing, applying and reading about jobs. So, in order to work on these platforms people on average have to puts in 18 hours of unpaid work. So, it is essentially a part time job is required just to find out about this work, just to apply for this work.

Student: Excuse me, what is this sample here?

So, this comes from a survey of African at mainly Kenya, I think Filipino workers that mark carried out um. So, I am going to say it is a perfectly valid sample size and have enough people in there (Refer Time: 34:31) working financially. To this is the story that we hear commonly, as people saying the amount of time you have to put into this is significant. Now, we want to get these jobs you have to spend time looking for that.

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Another work (Refer Time: 34:51) South African said, if you had another choice I do not think you would be sitting here behind a computer. They summarized their experience of this work quite clearly; you know if I could do something else, I would not be here.

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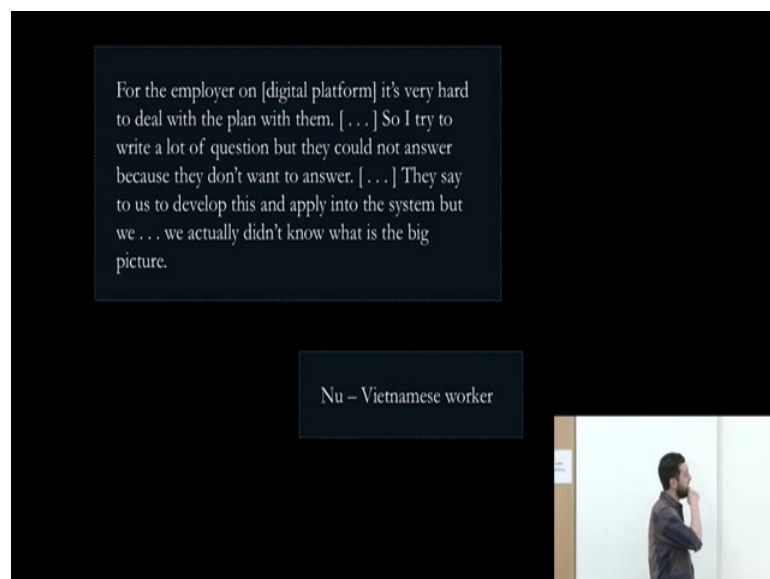
Another Vietnamese worker so it is for the employer on a digital labor platform, it is very hard to deal with the plan with them; now that is may have is the communication issues that many workers have on these platforms. Also new said that they try to write out a lot of questions; let us ask more about the work, but they could not answer, because

they do not want to answer. They say they want us to develop this and apply into the system, but we actually do not know what big pictures.

So, for many of these small tasks if you only paying a few cents for a task, you are not going to say an answer questions that workers have about the job, its already delivery done. This is the experience that people like who is applying for job and maybe you do not quite know what you are meant to be doing, a confusing process. If you are not told about what the larger job is, what you are contributing into it is a difficult to know what your small job should we do. If you are writing a smoothly should cover your designing a simply piece of end up that greater knowledge to work process becomes confusing and end in its.

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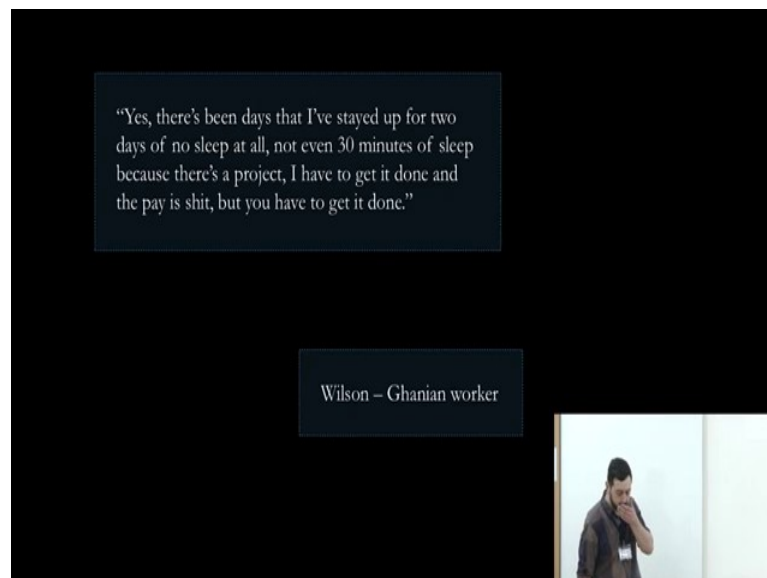
You know, it also becomes is a very stressful and difficult kind of work. As Wilson – Ghanaian worker said, they have been days where I stayed up for two days with no sleep at all, not even 30 minutes of sleep, because there is a projects, I have to get it done the pay is shit, but you have to get it done. And so after all that unpaid work to find a job, if you get one on one of these platforms, you have to make sure that you finish it, so that might be not working for most of the week; getting some work and working nonstop to make sure it is finished.

On many of the larger platforms, people are rates it by how they do their work. So, you want to make sure you are got a high rating that means, completing the work quickly, efficiently, to ensure that you are able to get more work in the future.

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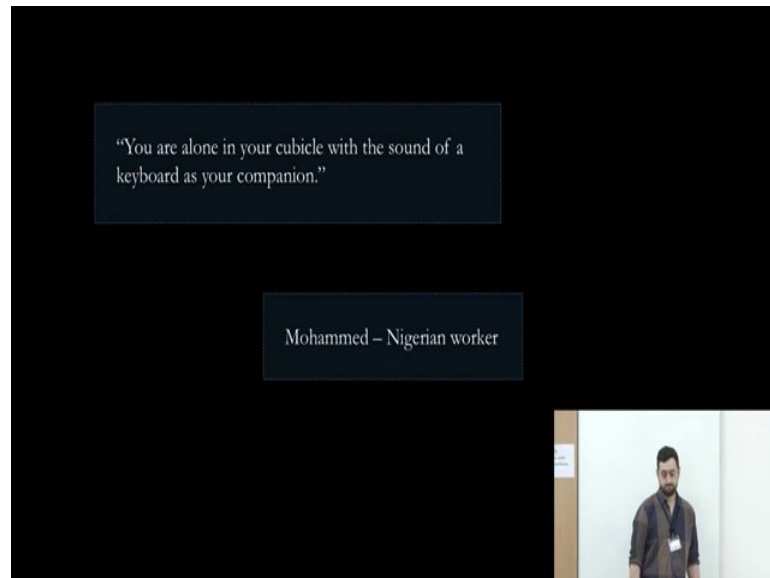
And for many people this can be quite isolated. So, Mohammed and Nigerian worker said, you are alone in your cubicle with the sound of a keyboard as your companion. Even the people who go into these kinds of cloud work factories, will they come into an office, into an (Refer Time: 37:48) are essentially working alone. Then you are collaborates in with colleagues, like new there might even find difficult to have questions answered. And so this kind of online work becomes incredibly fractured an isolates.

"Deliveroo don't care, it's got nothing to do with them, because you're an independent contractor so you have to deal with your own things, they don't care, they'll sign you off for the shift until you can get back, they'll say get back in touch with us and that's all through the call centre as well, not through a person who's like actually, a person who's even pretending to give a [expletive]."

Mumit – Deliveroo Rider
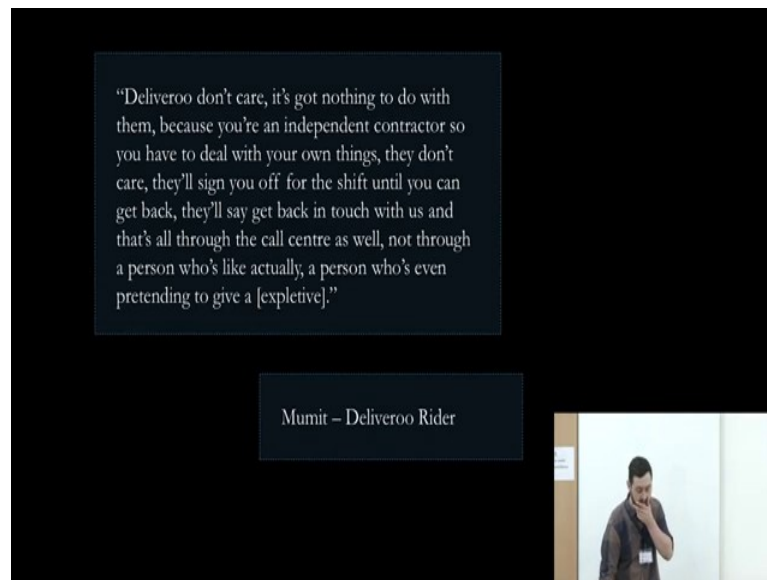
Now, it was now you change; so this is very different to taxi work or delivery work. And so I have been doing field work with Deliveroo which is like Zomato or Swiggy or Uber Eats so (Refer Time: 38:21) larger European platform availables for this. I have been doing field work with drivers of delivery food almost 3 years now, and they do not have this feeling of being alone in a cubicle with just the sound of a keyboard.

If you go into London, you see delivery drivers everywhere; we do not quite know how many there are, but we estimate something like 10 to 12000. And in London there are 40000s to 50000s people drivers just in the city. And so everywhere you go you see these workers, and if I can see these workers as I go around the city, you can be sure that they can see each other as they go around city. If you go to a popular street or restaurants, you see clumps of delivery drivers hanging out together, talking, sharing stories and invariably in the UK joining Whatsapp groups to share experiences of the workmen to complain and so on.

And with the story I want to tell about the delivery, is Mumit is a driver who one of the first drivers I met a Deliveroo; and he does not actually work for Deliveroo, he is self-employed the early works for Deliveroo so arguably it is important. And moment will involved in three different accidents box 39 and, and in one of the accidents he described like is he said, a Deliveroo do not care if you have an accident; it is got nothing to do

with them, because you are an independent contractor if this is the names of the states in the UK (Refer Time: 40:08).

And so you have to deal with doing things, they do not care, they will sign you off for the shift and so you can get back; they will say get back in touch with us and that is all through a call centre as well. Not even through a person who is like actually a person who is even pretending to give and you can fill in the creative London swearing that he had it in after all.

And now what Mumit is talking about here, he used to drive a motorbike to deliver food, and he was hit by a car, he broke his leg in his front of his (Refer Time: 40:44) motorbike was destroyed. Now, he was in shock and he was lying on the pavement, and he called delivery and said. If I had an accident then I do not know what going to do. And they said oh why (Refer Time: 40:58), we get new taxi on all. And Deliveroo send another rider to the accident spot to collect the food to go and deliver it to the customers. And this is why he did not call them up and said what would you do and they say oh no it has got nothing to do with us he did not work for us.

And they actually he said he said I am going to a hospital, they said yeah, yeah that is fine. We will deactivate you for now which is the equivalent of being fired. There are said when you better just give us a call and well we reactivate, no offers to call ambulance, pay for any the cost to replace the motorbike. And so this kind of location specific work, brings with a huge numbers of additional risks.

And I want to tell one other story which I think summarizes this kind of work. And whenever anybody asks in the UK, we use to some gig economy into this kind of work I do not know people are familiar with that, sometimes a bit specific which is to give this an idea that you no longer employed, you are just doing small gigs you might watch what we have got for a bit and deliver. And another driver, see the first driver we have done a series of interviews over a couple of years in one of them I said to him you know I have never asked you this before.

What, what is the most difficult thing about doing this kind of work you also think that kind of you find most challenging work. We always used to be was just to talk about things he hated about work and so on. Let us see what is the most important thing about it. And he cannot pause for a while and then he said the most difficult thing for me

delivering food on a platform is I wake up in the morning, I am not really a morning person. So, I try and eat some toast, but often I do not eat any food in the morning. I go to my first job, he worked in a in a library a book shop. He said I work in the book shop until lunchtime

I then leave the book shop and I deliver food for other peoples lunches over lunch time. Sometimes I eat sandwich, you know if I can I trying to eat something on the way. And then go back to my third job and which was working in a café. And he would work that job until the evening and then he would cycle to deliver food for other people in the evening. And he said you know the hardest thing for me is once I finished that evening shift maybe 10 o clock I would go home and the hardest thing is eating enough calories (Refer Time: 43:33) to get up the next morning to repeat the whole process.

And I think in that they can have deep harmony is somebody who is paid to deliver food for people who are too busy or too tired to cook food themselves, finds the most difficult thing is finding enough time to cook enough food for himself to be able to go back out and repeat the process.

Is they can have timing in time does they give (Refer Time: 44:08). But I think what it also shows is this you know I do not know how Zomato or Swiggy advertised in India, but these kind of platforms in the UK have glossy adverts of young people eating sushi or avocado on toast or you know looking young and fashionable and rich and like they are kind of loving their day of an according to work and so on.

Is the reality is what most people use these platforms for is to order cheap food, when they have been working too hard. And so this kind of work supports everybody else is over the work rather than being a kind of luxury item for many people, it becomes a way to work even harder it sort of.
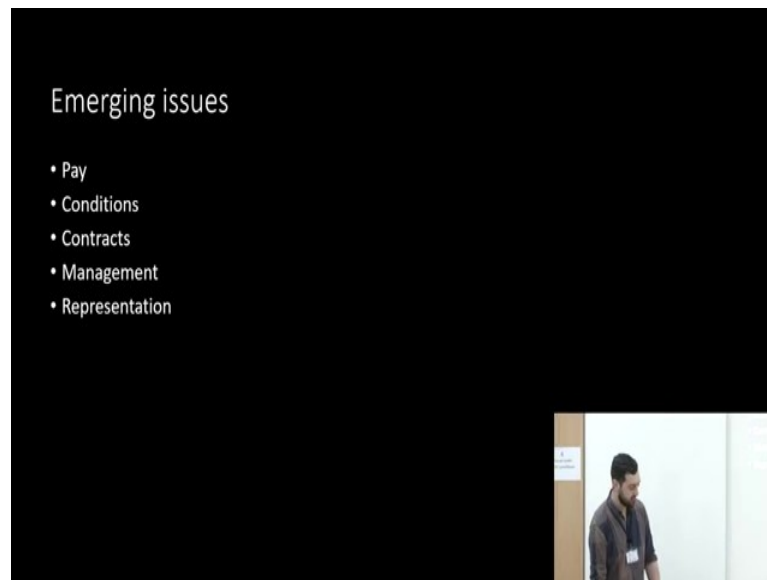
And so all of these things land mark and one is to think about what role research could play in thinking through some of the challenges of this, this kind of work. And so clearly there are some emerging issues here. Pay is a huge problem for most people. And the minimum wage means (Refer Time: 45:25) if you are completing work internationally, it means little if you are self-employed. Many people have to pay their own costs, and you know have to pay for a bicycle, bike or a car insurance and so on.

The conditions can be very difficult. And you might be doing these short online tasks, it can be very stress. You might be in content moderation spending your day, looking at things deemed too unpleasant for other peoples look at on the internet. You might be driving on the road to putting yourself at much more risk of accidents.

Contracts is a huge emerging issue. Again to talk about my granddad, you know the idea for him that you would work for a company like Uber and not be given a contract and just blow his mind, because to him that would obviously be employed. And so many people do not even have the basic rights that have been won at work over the past couple of 100 years. They are not even employed by many of these companies. This means when things go wrong, workers have very little way to challenge was not.

The fourth emerging issues questions around management. So, what does it mean to be constantly rated by a clients and one of the fascinating things about doing interviews with Uber drivers is if anybody has ever done this do interviews in the back of an Uber

or Ola driver is the moment you tell somebody I am going to give you five stars whatever we talk about, suddenly they are not so happy with a company or suddenly they want to talk to you about all manner of different things. Is the rating system structures are interactional news platforms were constantly thinking about what were saying and what they are saying. So, we can each reciprocally vote rate each other at the end of the process.

Think about what this means for the Uber driver, if you are having a bad day, you still have to be on your best performance. So, have to ask the customer had a doing of (Refer Time: 47:38) you know make them feel home in the taxi (Refer Time: 47:45). And in the UK this is quite an unusual experience, because before Uber taxi drivers did one of three things, they did not talk to you, they were rude to you or they complained about the weather and policies. These were the only terms of conversations you can have in the back of the car that was it.

Maybe (Refer Time: 48:04) maybe you know if you support different teams that conversation and all be that good be the person. But now when you get into an Uber oh how is your day going, how you are doing, oh but never politics because are given Uber you do not want to bring up politics with your client and find out and disagree, because they might give you one star. Whereas, if you do the rating suddenly these things open up much more, so it is just nothing to think about in terms of humanities.

There is also the facts it is no longer about being fired or losing your job, but just a matter of being deactivated. For many people there is no way to know whether you could lose a job or not. And more important it is very (Refer Time: 48:51) challenge if you lose your job. And so for many who are getting into this Uber and ola, if the customer complains about you on these platforms, you will usually suspended immediately and then the platform talks to the customer.

There is a very little way for a driver to say well the customer was behaving badly or the customer was very rude, it is very difficult for the workers to challenge decisions made about them. And then it is finally, there is an issue with representation how do the workers have a voice in this kind of work.

Student: (Refer Time: 49:27).

We hope so, but in many places there is no union for out work. There is no union in families (Refer Time: 49:36) workers. And in many parts of the worlds, so I think this is what one of the differences between geographically what is has to be in a place where what they have done has to be the place. It is very difficult for unions to organize workers who can be working all over the world or not. It is much easier for unions to organize what does it have to be in a particular place.

Well, what we see is in many countries the traditional taxi drivers opposing Uber or ola or whatever platform around and so not including them within their traditional representation structures. People might be able to correct me, but I believe there is only one city in the world where existing taxi drivers collaborate with Uber drivers which is New York city, the New York taxi workers of (Refer Time: 50:25).

Everywhere else there is tensions between the two so much. So, that in many places traditional taxi drivers will attack or smash the windows of Uber cars, driving away from the airports and so on. This is the case in France, in Argentina, and in Brazil which makes it quite difficult for these drivers have representation.

Student: How they know if somebody is driving the Uber?

Student: Sticker.

Yeah, just not a sticker.

Student: (Refer Time: 50:54).

Student: Yeah.

Yes, over in some places now they are done. So, this is a something I always think about when I get into a Uber in different countries in the UK, you always sit in the back of a taxi. You never ever sit in the front of the taxi, it is just a kind of strange (Refer Time: 51:14). So much so that some taxis in the UK do not have a seat in the passenger side in the front. They take the seat out for some reason.

In some countries if you go and take an Uber, they ask you to sit in the front because then it does not look like an Uber. So, if you if you get into Uber in the airport in

Argentina, they will ask you to sit in the front, so that the meet to taxi driver is done nor in the Uber.

So, in some cases people try and hide the (Refer Time: 51:43) Uber drivers.

Student: (Refer Time: 51:46).

Hm.

You show.

Ok.

Student: So, I would like to add something during my field work in Kanpur and Lucknow, all I found out in Lucknow there was a organized protest with Uber drivers, but for the Kanpur they did not have a airport. So, this we had turned to (Refer Time: 52:02) to get in flight. So, I was travelling from Kanpur to Lucknow, and this person says that I have not (Refer Time: 52:10). He said there is a protest there, and they are smashing all the Ola cars who are travelling from Kanpur to Lucknow. And these group of are people in the same platform.

Hm.

Student: But still so much anger in (Refer Time: 52:24).

Yeah and (Refer Time: 52:28) meet to meet with taxi drivers have burn Uber cars as if Ola or Uber cars to them to beat the driver and smash up the cars and so on. So, this causes major problems of representation. And so in the UK, there is a trade union for taxi drivers which is part of the second biggest trade union in the country and they are opposition with Uber is that it should be banned, and they lobby the local governments who banned Uber. This means of course, they are not trying to recruit these Uber drivers or to unionize them, because they see them as a problem rather than another group of workers.

So, what this means is for many people in the big economy, if they want that kind of collective representation, they have to do it themselves. And often what this means is when drivers meet each other, they joined Whatsapp groups, they talk about what they do not like about the work and so on, this becomes the embryo of a new form of

representation you know how people get in touch with each other. In some cases, this develops into a trade union and so in the UK Uber drivers are a part of a small trade union. In South Africa, they have a network, but one of the problems is traditionally speaking self-employed people are not allowed to be in trade unions.

And so in the US the teamsters union started organizing Uber drivers, and Uber took them to court saying they were running a price setting cartel which is the equivalent of all the self-employed businesses coming together and deciding to fix their rates. And so this problem with employment status has a huge knock on effect with representation is in many cases self employed people cannot have a union. So, they cannot use those traditional channels to ask for higher wages or better conditions and so on.

In most countries, yeah, I do not know what the law is in India, but in the UK and most of Europe, North America, it is a illegal people. So, have sometimes they can have an association, but that is usually to do training to lobby the government, these kinds of things. Now, this of course, does not stop protests, strikes and so on emerging, but they emerge in a bit a very different way because they are not mediated by a trading.

And so technically the union in London is not recognized by the Uber, and people have never said the name of this trade union and they would never negotiate with it. Because if they were to negotiate the union could then have the self-employed status of its own. So, you end up with this kind of bond.

And so these are the kinds of emerging issues. These are of course, felt very differently in the global north to the global south. Generally, speaking the global north these platforms are experienced as a degradation of working conditions of people moving out of formal employment and into these kinds of problems, lower protections, lower wages and so on.

Generally speaking in a lots of the global south this is experienced as a movement out of informal work, and so it might have some improved conditions in various ways, but allows people to escape previous labour market conditions. The outcome for both is still negative in most cases, but it comes from different previous positions broadly speaking.

And so one of the solutions that we have tried to develop to this is to think of a high academic research could contribute to understanding and improving some of the conditions of this kind of work. And so mark and I work on a projects fair work projects which is funded by the general development agency which is to try and think about ways that conditions could be improved, and triple IT you were very kind to host us earlier this year for stakeholder meeting, because we are focusing both on India and South Africa.

And what we have developed is a ten point scoring system. So, a platforms can get a score for meeting basic standards on (Refer Time: 57:10), and then an improved standard.

So, they are kind of three points each, its rating all of these platforms in terms of how they perform in finance. So, how fair is it to the worker who finds work in these platforms. Now, the idea here is twofold, threefold. And the first is to highlight two workers that some of these platforms have very different conditions to others. And now this is important I think for the second reason is many of these platforms also you know Uber and Ola or Uber and taxi driver you know the different transport platforms.

If some of them do off the different things. So, in South Africa tax, if I take 10 percent less of a cut than Uber do. And so highlighting some of these better practices can provide a way for that representation to think about what could be (Refer Time: 58:07) on a platform.

If one delivery platform provides insurance, why does not the other one. So, these could become minimum standards that workers could ask for on platforms. Now, the second part of this is thinking about how platforms themselves could be leveraged. And I think to give you an example of how this has worked say for in South Africa, because we have met with a whole number of platforms in South Africa and have shown them the scope.

And said you have performed this well, this badly in most cases. And said were going to public publicize your scope and were going to compare you to with other platforms in South Africa. We are going to do this early next year and so you have some time until this happens you could make some changes and that would improve your scope.

Now, what is interesting is that by not employing these workers, lots of platforms have a huge issue with churn. It is very easy for an Uber driver to go and work for Ola or to switch from one delivery platform to another, and so lots of platforms are worried about competing platforms taking away their market share in terms of customers or workers. And so in South Africa lots of platforms were prepared to make some relatively substantial changes to ensure that they came out as the most fair platform.

And so what we are trying to do with this is leverage research to open up spaces where workers can think about how they can shape their conditions at work. And this has always been something that has changed historically. Last time, I am going to use the granddad example, you are thinking about my granddad, you know who works, he worked two jobs in his whole life.

He worked on the railways and he worked in a hospital. These are very traditional kinds of workplaces. They had unions; they had specific sites he went to every day. You could make sense of them very easily. Workers for and transformed those kinds of workplaces into better places to work.

Think about the service industry that came in and took many of those jobs. Think about how people are beginning to find ways to improve that kind of work. All we are talking about the platform work is in a sense the future of work. But the future of work is a funny concept in (Refer Time: 60:39), it is not really a future of work if your people are starting to work, it is becoming a present for many people. But it still retains that future aspects in that many of the conditions are not set. What will it be like to work for Uber in

5 years time would it be like to work for Zomato or Amazon Mechanical Turk is thinking about how worker voice needs to be integrated critically in.