Worker monitoring and surveillance in digital labour platforms

Compliance, resistance and risk in workplace 4.0

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Structure

- Introduction

- Platform work and end-to-end surveillance

- Control, compliance and resistance in platform work

- Psycho-social risks and platformic surveillance in the traditional workplace

- Conclusions

Compliance and resistance to algorithmic control

How do algorithms control work? By:

- Restricting behaviours

- Recommending courses of action

- Recording activity

- Rating activity in real time

- Readily replacing people

- Rewarding and gamifying high performance

Kellogg, K, Valentine, M and Christin, A (2020) Algorithms at work: The new contested terrain of control *Academy of Management Annals* 14 (1) pp 366 - 410

Compliance and resistance to algorithmic control ctd

Surveillance: *Any collection and processing of data, whether personally identifiable or not, for the purposes of influencing and managing those whose data have been garnered* (Lyon, 2001: 2)

Social sorting: *the use of data-derived electronic profiles of employees to drive decision making about them*

	Least pervasive		Most pervasive
Object	Business unit	Work group	Individual
Period	Regular infrequent	Regular infrequent	Immediate
Recipient	Employee	Supervisor	Public
Tasks	Track results	Track process	Assign and track

Grant and Higgins (1989) Pervasiveness model

'the isolation of the visibles (workers) by the coalition of the invisibles (platform, client)' (Curchod et al 2020).
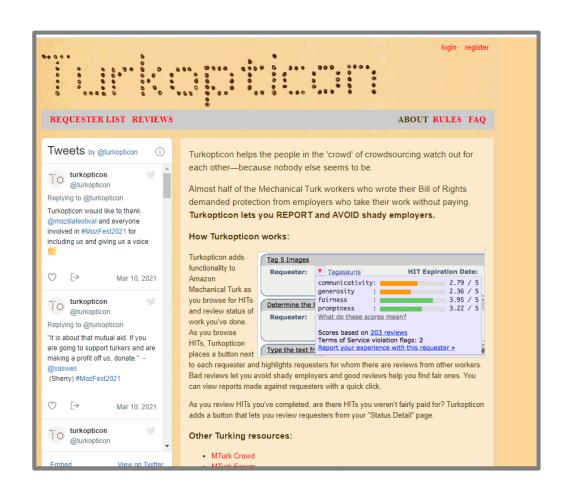
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Developing an 'algorithmic imaginary' (Chan and Humphreys 2018)

- Anticipatory compliance:
  - Not complaining publicly
  - Not reporting too many problems
  - Not reaching out to clients too much
  - Not showing emotion (Bucher et al 2020)
  - Identifying most lucrative work Veen et al (2020)
  - Identifying most relevant indicators (Galiere 2020)
  - Avoiding account deactivation at all costs

- Internalising norms:
  - Allocating discretionary effort to customers who give good ratings (Brugiere 2019)
  - Blocking bad customers (Curchod et al 2020)
  - Adopting entrepreneurial identity to match that of platform (Galiere 2020)
  - Hiding true emotional and material labour involved (Irani 2015b)

Turkopticon: Worker-run review site of work requesters on MTurk.

Shapiro (2018:2968)

…control ultimately hinges on workers' willingness to conform to the calculative rationalities that companies project onto them. Workers reflect on the conditions of their work. They develop a sense of company strategies and tolerate them to the extent that they align with their own interests

Algorithmic control provokes resistance (Kellogg et al 2020)

- Restriction and recommendation:
  - Frustration; awareness of bias; reduced wellbeing; reduced voice; precarity (Cheng and Foley 2019)
- Recording and rating:
  - loss of privacy; fair representation through data; lack of ability to challenge results; in person assessments absent
- Replacing and rewarding:
  - precarity, frustration and stress

"Algo-activism"
- Practical action
  - Non-cooperation with rules
  - Reid-Musson et al (2020); Briziarelli and Armano 2020)
- Platform action
  - Knowledge sharing on fora, reverse surveillance (Anwar and Graham 2020)
- Discursive framing of unfairness
  - Engaging in public critique
- Legal and collective mobilisation
  - Tassinare and Macarronne (2020)
  - Cant (2020)

Data related to…	Type of data
Employees outside the organization	Demographic data, Education, Participation in social networks
The position of the employee in the organization	Type of hire, Status of the position, Salary and benefits, Changes in the organization, Date of last promotion
Work carried out in the organization	Individual performance, Performance evaluations, Sentiments and assessments, Content and the receivers of their messages in organizational platforms
The employee herself/himself/themself	Personality traits, Cognitive abilities and skills, Expertise, Training undertaken

(Fernandez and Gallardo-Gallardo, 2020)

Known psycho-social risks of monitoring in the traditional workplace

- Exceeding/excessive purpose
- One size does not fit all
- Invasiveness in terms of:
  - Scope
  - Target
  - Constraint
  - Target control
- Transparency

- Trust
- Managerial support
- Tech design
- Distributive justice
- Procedural justice
- Emotional labour and identity work

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Conclusions

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