

# **designing labor markets for empowerment**

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Ali Alkhatib, Michael Bernstein, Margaret Levi  
[ali.alkhatib@cs.stanford.edu](mailto:ali.alkhatib@cs.stanford.edu) || @\_alialkhatib

April 17, 2018

The Future of Work & Workers

# **designing labor markets for empowerment**

provocations to imagine different forms of empowerment

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The Future of Work & Workers

# Quick roadmap

- Outline the landscape
- A useful insight
- Framing the problem
- Vitae
- Taking a step back — the many dimensions on which we can operate

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# Introduction

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# Outlining the landscape

Crowd work



**Upwork**

**UBER**

Gig Work



**On-demand work is a modern instantiation of a  
much older phenomenon**

**On-demand work is a modern instantiation of a  
much older phenomenon**

**piecework**

# Outlining the landscape

Crowd work



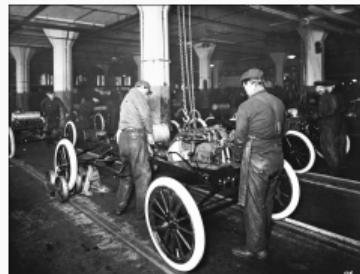
**Upwork**

**UBER**

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# Outlining the landscape



Crowd work



**Upwork**

**UBER**

Gig Work



**provocation**

**#1**

**What is work going to look like in the future?**

## **(Re)framing the question**

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## (Re)framing the question

### Persistent issues in on-demand work

- People have varied work histories
- How can we be confident that on-demand workers are qualified?
- Work histories are often reduced to 5-star or binary ratings
- Workers' histories not necessarily reliable

**How can workers **organize, govern, and act** in environments increasingly controlled by the platforms on which they work?**

## Hiring Halls

Hiring halls historically ameliorated these issues:

1. Varied, transient work histories offset by relatively stable organizations
2. These organizations traded on their collective reputations
3. Hiring halls consolidated negotiation between employers and workers

**What sorts of affordances and values would we build into the walls of factories, if we could?**

# Vitae

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# Vitae

- A qualification management system
- Scaffolding to deliberate on work
- A series of communities of workers

# Qualification Management

Worker ID: A2XJHG2J2FHVXX ⓘ

Hello, Ali Akbari! | Sign Out

Amazon Mechanical Turk

HITs Dashboard Qualifications

Transcribe some audio (HIT Details)

All Alphabets HITs 2 Reward \$1.00 Time Allocated 160 Min

Skip Accept

You must accept this Requester's HIT before working on it. Learn more

We can't determine eligibility during HIT preview.

This task uses an external qualification system called Vitae to make sure you're eligible.

You need to have this extension installed and be in one of the necessary communities to be eligible. The requester should make it clear what group you should be in to be eligible.

You can check your eligibility without installing Vitae by entering your worker ID:

check my eligibility

Interested in downloading Vitae? Go here

Report this HIT | Why Report

Skip Accept

Sorry, you're not in the community for this task ("random\_forest").

This means you're not eligible.

If you think you should be in the "random\_forest" community, please contact the manager of that community.

Otherwise, please return the HIT so others can attempt it. Thanks.

Please transcribe the audio in the player below

Keep in mind these style guidelines

- Whenever someone else starts speaking, always start a

Please transcribe the audio in the player below

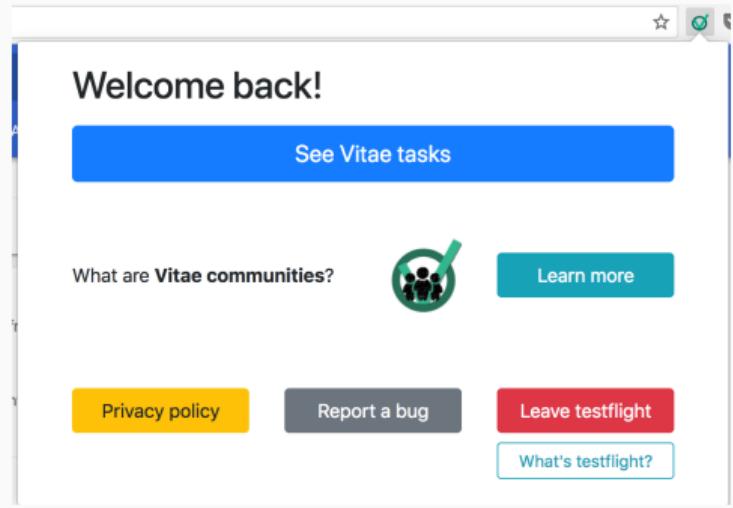
You're eligible for this task.

Happy Turking!

Keep in r

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# Scaffolding to deliberate on work



The Amazon Mechanical Turk interface shows a HIT detail page. It includes a "Discuss" button with a checkmark, a "Flag" button, a "Skip" button, and an "Accept" button. The task details show a "Reward" of \$1.00 and a "Time Allotted" of 180 Min.

# Communities of workers

☆ | 866 | 0 | Add a topic

vitae TASKS ON AMAZON IV.

Vitae Tasks on AMT

Hi @channel! There are tasks on Mechanical Turk for you. Please check in there and check in back here if there are issues.

Vitae Tasks on Amazon Mechanical Turk

Vitae Tasks on AMT

 Vitae Bot APP 9:32 AM

Hi @channel! A HIT was flagged!

HIT flagged!

Does this HIT violate the rules for testflight?

When discussing whether the HIT is appropriate, please refer to the rules at <https://vitae.online/communities/testflight>

I'm curious if these hits are flagged by people in this community, or are they being flagged by others who are not able to do these hits?

that is a good question idn't have any problems doing the hit. I was just going to come in and ask why the last one was flagged as I was able to do it just fine.

**How do we evaluate the success or failure of systems  
intended to empower and uplift workers?**

# Evaluating Vitae

1. Does Vitae make it easier for quality workers to trade on their collective reputation?

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1. Does Vitae make it easier for quality workers to trade on their collective reputation?
2. Can Vitae pull sites of labor like Mechanical Turk out of this “market for lemons” scenario?

## **On the horizon**

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## Timeline

- Approximately 300 workers actively using Vitae.

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- Around 1000 people in the system

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- Approximately 300 workers actively using Vitae.
- Around 1000 people in the system
- Collaborations with academic requesters

**How can we ensure that platforms that empower workers in negotiations with (or rather, **against**) employers don't also **endanger** those workers?**

## **Taking a step back**

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## Taking a step back

1. On-demand work is a modern instantiation of piecework
2. What is work going to look like in the future?
3. How can workers **organize**, **govern**, and **act** in environments increasingly controlled by the platforms on which they work?
4. What sorts of **values** would we build into the walls of factories, if we could?
5. How do we **evaluate** the success or failure of systems intended to empower and uplift workers?
6. How can we ensure that platforms that empower workers in negotiations with employers don't also **endanger** those workers?

# Questions, Discussion, Thoughts

Thanks to CASBS for letting me come here to talk about some of these questions on my mind, and to mediaX for supporting my thinking about these things.

name: Ali Alkhatib

email: [ali.alkhatib@cs.stanford.edu](mailto:ali.alkhatib@cs.stanford.edu)

twitter: [@\\_alialkhhatib](https://twitter.com/_alialkhhatib)