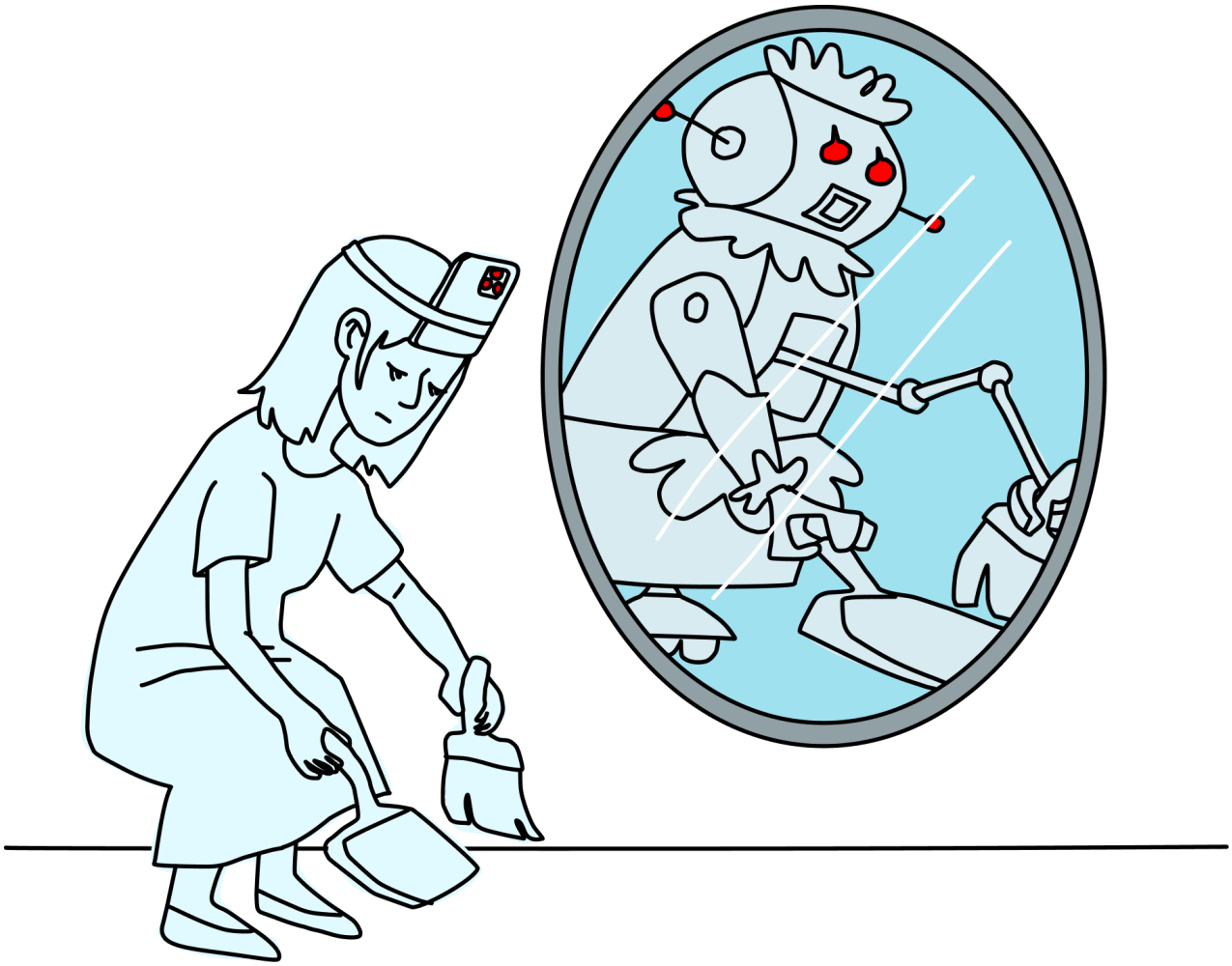
“Earn money recording your routine”: Project Robotina and Data Work for Domestic AI



Susana Opazo

"Earn money recording your routine": Project Robotina and Data Work for Domestic AI ["Gana dinero grabando tu rutina diaria": Proyecto Robotina y el trabajo de datos para la IA de robótica doméstica] © 2026 por Susana Opazo is licensed under CC BY 4.0. To see a copy of this license, visit: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/



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I

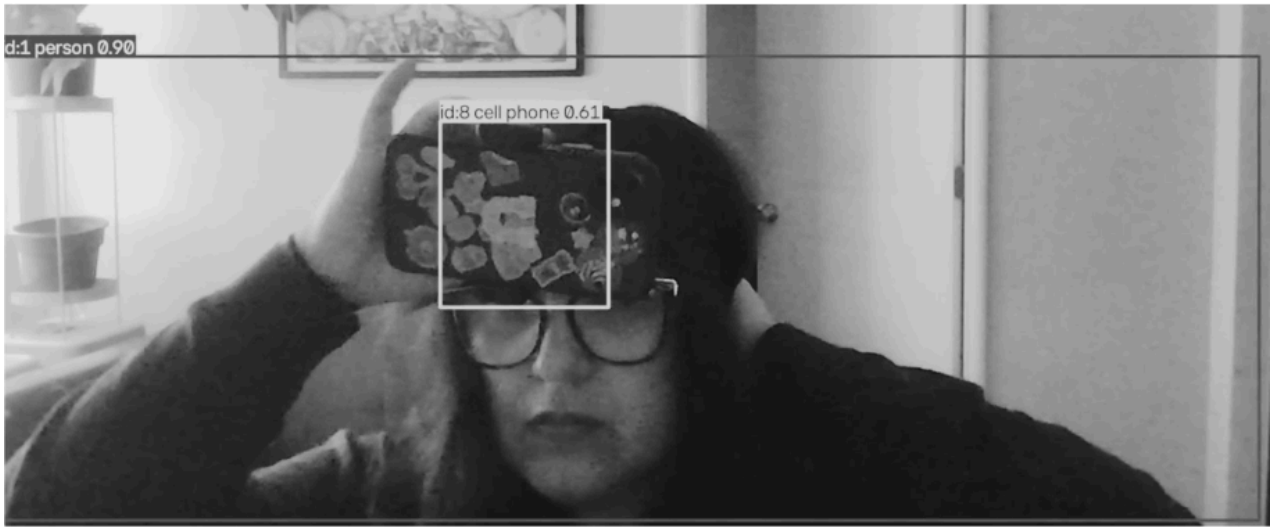
It is a summer Tuesday in December 2025. My computer signals noon, and I decide to get up from the chair where I have been working since ten o'clock. I stand, picking up my cell phone from the table where it had been charging to the right of the computer. I watch my cats for a moment. I glance at the phone screen: 12:04, forty-five percent battery. Enough to record a five-minute video. My cats approach the window to look outside and bask in the twenty centimeters of direct sunlight that filters into our thirty-square-meter apartment, tucked between two buildings in the center of Santiago.

If I make twelve of those videos, I get paid for one hour. I make a plan: first, I'll clean the cat litter boxes, then I'll prepare their lunch, and after that, I'll sweep the living room. I can't think of any more videos for now, but I know I need to come up with nine additional ideas to reach a full hour of footage. Every hour of work I can manage brings me closer to my three main goals for the month: paying the rent, buying cat food, and settling the debts left behind by my second failed business.

I put on a record to listen to while the recording takes place. Each side of the record lasts between twenty and twenty-two minutes, and I know that side A contains two songs, each about ten minutes long. Using songs to estimate the duration of each recording helps me meet the five-minute minimum. Sometimes it's one song, sometimes it's two, and sometimes it's the same song played twice.

I go to my bookshelf to look for the head harness. I'm not sure why I always leave it there after filming. I unplug my phone from the charger and clean both of its camera lenses. I open the camera app and check the settings. Thirty FPS, check. Resolution at 1080p, check. I already configured this a few days ago, but I still double-check every time I start, just in case I changed something by mistake. Zoom set to zero point five, check. Time to attach the phone to the harness mount. I adjust it to ensure it's as balanced as possible, while also trying to keep the camera centered so the weight doesn't lean more to one side than the other. I'm careful not to touch the screen during this maneuver, so I don't accidentally alter any of the settings. Phone secured to the mount, it's time to strap the harness onto my head. The harness consists of two five-centimeter-wide elastic bands: one wraps horizontally around my head, the other runs from the back to the forehead, where a plastic block that holds the mount for the

phone sits. My phone weighs nearly 200 grams. I think if I were wearing a 200-gram hat, it wouldn't be much of an issue, as the weight would be distributed across my entire head; but in this case, since all the weight is concentrated on my forehead, my neck has to control every movement to keep the camera balanced. I check myself in the mirror both before and after filming—every time I use the harness, it messes up my hair.



I recall that I previously cleaned the litter boxes in that corner of the apartment, so I decide to pick them up and move them next to the sofa for the recording. That corner had already been captured on film; recording it a second time could be grounds for rejection.

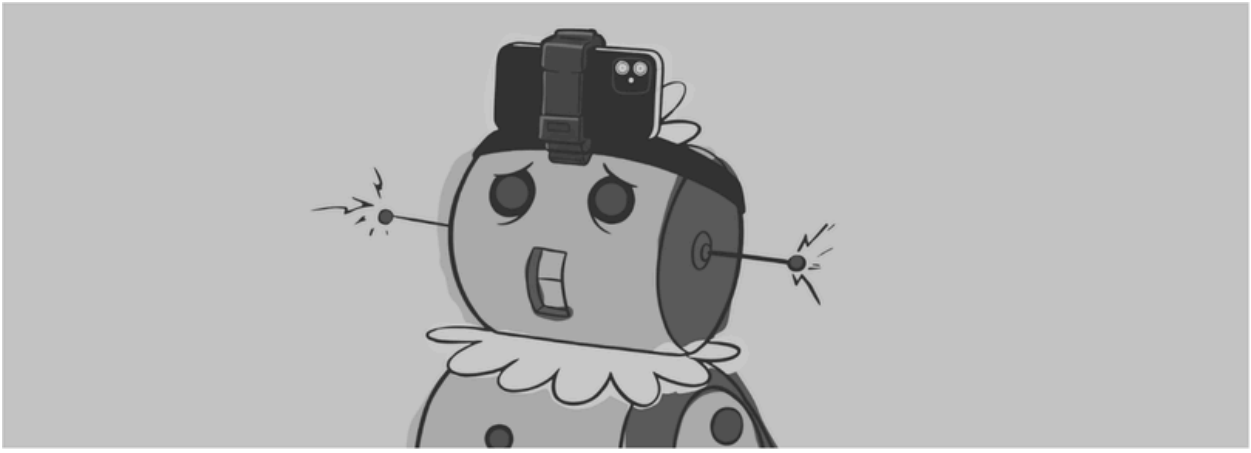
I adjust the camera angle on the mount so that both my hands and arms are visible in the frame. The most tense moment is pressing the record button. I can't see the screen, so I rely on the sound it makes. I worry that I might have accidentally zoomed out, or tapped the last photo taken and opened the gallery. It's the kind of clumsy mistake that can easily happen when trying to operate a phone without seeing the screen, especially while having to reach up to my forehead to manipulate it.

> >> The recording begins. I move slowly to pick up the scoop for handling the feces. I walk toward the kitchen to get the bags. Nothing hurries me; everything slows me down. I try to keep my head steady and aligned, moving my neck slowly to avoid shaking the camera. I hope both hands are visible within the frame. Mentally crossing my fingers, as it were, to ensure they stay in view. My actual fingers are busy with the task at hand. It scares me to think that they might not be, and that I'd have to restart recording again.

I imagine myself tearing open the bag of waste and placing the contents back into the litter box, so I can re-record the process of scooping them out. I begin collecting the feces with the scoop, one by one. The camera was positioned with a focus solely on framing my arms. Holding the scoop, I place it where I imagine the center of the frame to be. I dig into the litter, lift out a piece of waste, and move it toward the bag positioned to the left of the litter box. Then I return the scoop to what I assume is the center of the frame. I shift the litter box from side to side to move the sand around, revealing the hardened clumps of urine. I pick each one up with complete calm, depositing them into the bag even more slowly. I wonder how my legs might look from this high angle—will they appear larger than usual? Will the wide-angle lens distort their appearance? Will any other human ever see this video? Will they look at my legs, my arms, the tattoos on my hands? I'm wearing shorts. Perhaps I should change into long pants for the next take. I go over areas that are already clean, picking up the individual grains of litter one by one. In truth, I'm likely performing these actions with more tension than calm. I stir the litter a few more times with the scoop until I sense that I'm past the midpoint of the song. I stand up to discard the bag of waste, clean the scoop, and put away the bags. The song ends. I bring my hand to my forehead and stop the recording.

I look in the mirror. My hair is disheveled. The plastic of the head-mount against my forehead is damp. I don't know if I sweated because of the tension, the summer heat, or the head-mount itself. Probably all of the above. I wash my hands. I sit down in the dining room. I transfer the video from my phone to my computer. I log into the platform. I attach the video. I fill in the details in the fields the platform requires. I click "submit." I

glance at my phone screen: 12:26, thirty percent battery. The cats are using the litter box I just cleaned. The sunlight no longer comes in.



II

What I have just described here has been defined, configured, and established beforehand.

I currently work for various platforms that manage data annotation and production for training cutting-edge artificial intelligence models. The projects I have participated in have ranged in duration from a couple of minutes to a couple of months. I have been working in this capacity for a year. Since it is not stable employment, I must constantly submit applications to secure work for the following week. I sign up for every platform that appears and apply to any posting where I believe I can contribute.

Last year, one day in November, I was added to a new project channel on the Discord server of one of these platforms. This project was called **Project Robotina**. Well, that's not its actual name; I chose that pseudonym to keep the real one anonymous. While it isn't the original name, it's quite similar, as the real one also referenced a robot from pop culture, although that robot is more associated with destruction. I decided "Robotina", the domestic-service robot from the cartoon The Jetsons, known as Rosie the Robot in English, was a more fitting name, given the nature of the project.

Hundreds of other people joined the project the same way I did: out of the blue, without any formal application process. The only visible commonality was our geographic location; most of us were from South America or India. As with other similar projects, there were hundreds of participants, with just three people in charge of answering questions, clarifying doubts, defining tasks, issuing updates, and so on.

The work was recording domestic spaces from an egocentric, that is first-person, perspective, with each recording lasting at least five minutes. To do this, we needed a specific piece of equipment: a smartphone mount, which we had to purchase with our own money, with the promise of an eventual reimbursement. The budget for the mount was 15 USD, paid out of the pockets of those of us who could afford it.

All the details regarding what we had to do were already laid out in an 11-page document, a classic Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), which specified every single requirement for each recording[1]. The device had to be a mobile phone: an iPhone 11 or newer, or an equivalent Android model. The camera angle had to be between 45 and 90 degrees, pointed downward. The minimum resolution was 720p at 30 FPS, and the framing had to be horizontal. Most importantly, the digital wide-angle setting, a 0.5x zoom. It was mandatory that at least one of our hands remained visible throughout the entire recording.

One point, mentioned at least four times throughout the document, was this: *If you fail to meet this requirement, your video will be automatically rejected, with no payment or reimbursement*. If your phone didn't qualify, even if it met the technical specifications, such as camera resolution, you could be removed from the project, obviously with no payment or reimbursement.

> >> Each video had to last at least 5 minutes, and you were required to perform only one activity during that time. If you were sweeping, you had to sweep for the full 5 minutes. If your video lasted 4 minutes and 59 seconds, it would be discarded entirely. If you fail to meet this requirement, your video will be automatically rejected, with no payment or reimbursement.

[1] *Standard Operating Procedure* (SOP) of the Robotina Project, 11 page document shared with all workers (November 2025). Personal archive. Available as Annex.

Another striking requirement in the SOP was that your home or the residential space where the recordings took place had to have "modern appliances and accessories", as well as "a high standard of visual appeal"[2].

The timing was dictated by the natural light in the home, which provided the best lighting. Sometimes I would leave things to be cleaned up the next day, as that way I could record early in the morning, reducing the chances of the submission being rejected.

Regarding the composition of the video, the focus was on the manipulation of objects, broken down into three stages: *picking*, *holding*, and *placing*. This meant keeping the object in view throughout the entire action and ensuring that one's hands remained visible in every frame, from the moment the object was picked up until it was placed in its designated spot. Always visible. Sometimes, you might turn your head because of a noise elsewhere in the house, causing your hands or the object you were holding to go out of view. *If you fail to meet this requirement, your video will be automatically rejected, with no payment or refund provided.*

> >> The SOP stated: *"IMPORTANT: Your face will NOT be visible during this project so your identity is protected."* While my face was indeed not visible, my tattoos and other identifying features could be seen in every video.

It was forbidden to show other people inside your home, including your own reflection, whether in a mirror, on glass, on a television screen, or on any other surface. Even the slightest glimpse would result in the video being automatically rejected. For instance, if you were cleaning your windows and recording the process, and you accidentally let your reflection appear—even for just a second, or even if only part of your face was visible—your video would be rejected. *If you fail to meet this requirement, your video*

[2] Original formulation: *Reminder, this project is completing tasks around a residential home with modern appliances and accessories. The environment which you're using to record the video must maintain a high standard of visual appeal. The environment needs to look good.*

will be automatically rejected, with no payment or refund provided. Even though the video was rejected, it was not removed from the platform. The contract made no distinction between accepted and rejected videos and everything we uploaded became the property of the platform, including all associated intellectual property rights.[3] You would submit your work, it would be rejected, you wouldn't get paid, and yet they would still keep the video.

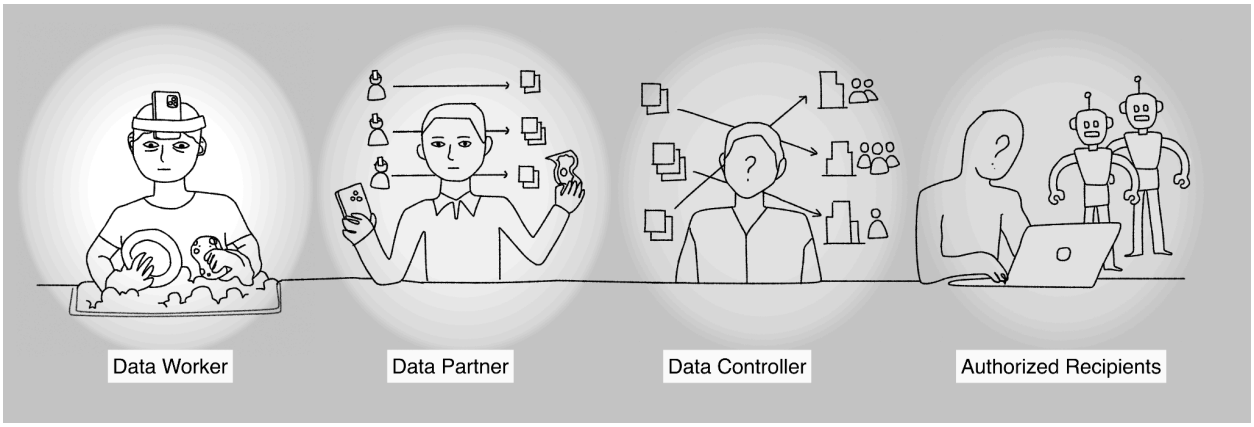
The document outlined common errors that could occur during recording that would lead to immediate rejection. For example, if it appeared that a user was holding the phone by hand rather than using a mount, the video would be sent for "rework": it had to be re-recorded, as it would not be accepted. *If you fail to meet this requirement, your video will be automatically rejected, with no payment or refund provided.*

As participants, we could view the data rows for everyone else. We could see clearly that 80% of the videos were rejected for one reason or another, while 20% were accepted. Personally, all of my submissions were approved because I became obsessed with avoiding rejections, as they meant a significant waste of time and consequently, a loss of money. If a minimum duration of 5 minutes was required, I would record 6. I applied this same approach to every single requirement.

Each video corresponded to a specific task, which in turn corresponded to a data row with a binary status: "done" or "rework." Accepted or rejected. I had to record the footage, upload the video, and provide additional information in the form of descriptions for each recorded task. Everything that followed the actual recording took at least an extra 15 minutes per video. That time was unpaid.

Payment was based solely on the number of minutes of accepted video. The platform kept changing the rate as the project progressed, without any notice or negotiation: it started at 15 USD for a 5-minute video and ended at 2 USD per hour of accepted video. The reimbursement for the mount arrived along with my first payment—25 USD in total, including the cost of the mount. In other words, I earned 10 USD for 20 videos.

[3] Excerpt from the independent service provision agreement with the platform: *To the fullest extent permitted by law, you assign to [Company] all intellectual property rights in the recordings you submit, including copyright and any related rights. Where an assignment is not possible, you instead grant [Company] an exclusive, worldwide, perpetual, royalty-free, fully paid-up, transferable and sub-licensable licence to use the recordings for the purposes above.* Personal archive.



Between those of us doing the recording and the laboratory that will use the data, there are four distinct parties involved. First, there are those of us doing the recording and our households. Next is the platform that hires us, referred to in the contract as the "data partner". Thirdly, this platform has a client that commissions this work, known as the "data controller." Finally, there are the "authorized recipients", who are the end clients that receive the material to train, evaluate, and develop robotic and AI models. So, the four parties are: myself, the data partner, the data controller, and the authorized recipient[4]. The stated purposes include training, testing, benchmarking, as well as reproducing, adapting, annotating, combining, and creating derivative works using the material.

My cats' litter box is waiting to be cleaned, while I wait for my phone to charge so I can record the process. The cats are looking at me, annoyed that their litter box still hasn't been cleaned.

[4] Terminology from the independent service provision agreement with the platform (personal archive).



III

I wipe down the record cabinet with a blue cloth for six minutes. My right hand enters the frame, exits, then re-enters. My left hand remains fixed, resting on the edge of the cabinet, a technique to keep me in the same frame. My right hand wipes and moves things on the surface of the cabinet. Pick up, hold, place. Pick up, hold, place. While cleaning with my phone to my forehead, I am doing two tasks simultaneously, and only one of them is cleaning. The other is constantly monitoring that my arms remain visible, that my head turns slowly, that the phone and the zoom stay in place, and that the action lasts six minutes without appearing unnatural. Both tasks in the same gesture and at the same time. My actions are produced to be recorded. The difference seems minor, but it is the whole point. Somewhere unknown to me, my action of cleaning the cabinet will probably be given another label. I imagine something like "an example of how a human hand holds and moves a piece of microfiber cloth with which it dusts a wooden piece of furniture."

> >> While my job is to clean and record that action, the outcome of my work is something else entirely. My furniture, now clean, stays here. The video of this action is uploaded to the platform and passes through various hands before reaching the recipient, who then makes use of its primary value: my gesture. The movement of my hands, my arms, the force I apply, the angle of my wrists, the time I take, the distance between the start of the microfiber cloth's movement across the furniture and the point where its path ends.

The purpose of my video is to show something beyond a clean record cabinet: it's how this cabinet is cleaned, and what is learned from how the cabinet is cleaned is destined to clean cabinets without me. With the video, I deliver a capability. Each rule of the SOP, if we read in reverse, describes the future machine. Each condition reveals a limitation of the system to be trained: visible hands, no cuts, camera in an egocentric perspective. I sold this exact gesture, with these hands and this duration. I was paid once for that time, but the material and what can be created with it as derivative work is infinite. It can continue to be used without me knowing for how long or for what purpose. I will never know if my videos trained anything. If tomorrow a robot cleans a litter box or a record cabinet somewhere in the world, I will not know whether it learned by watching me.

There are two conditions that distinguish this labor from any other precarious job in the data and platform economy. The first is that I am the product. It is my body and my gestures. It is my home and my privacy. My hands, my tattoos, the dust on my furniture, the light that enters through my window on mornings of recording. The worker in the classic factory described by Marx produces an external object, like a shirt or a chair, and alienation lies in that separation.[5] In this situation, the object of sale is the body itself and its movements in the most intimate space. This is why the rules of the SOP speak only of physicalities: visibility, angles, continuous flows of movement. Without this need for embodiment, the scene could be that of any other data labeling

[5] Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, First Manuscript, section "Alienated Labor". Digital edition from the Marxists Internet Archive.

project, where we visually delimit the traffic lights of a street with polygons, or the walls and windows of a house on an architectural plan. In those kinds of projects, what we do is deliver visual cognitive capacity, and we leave the body, identity, and privacy on the margins of the transaction. The second condition is stipulated in the service contract. By signing the independent services agreement, I ceded my gestures for the manufacture of something that will render them dispensable. With each video, I was providing training material for systems designed to replicate my actions for an end client focused on developing assistive robots. The replacement of human labor figures as the almost explicit purpose in the agreement I signed.

This phenomenon goes beyond the technical and becomes deeply ingrained in my very being. Technically, the wide-angle lens is a strict requirement for the model to be able to map the entire room. Subjectively, dealing with that lens implies confronting body dysmorphia: seeing my arms on screen looking fatter than normal, visibly larger than they already are, captured from above as part of a body fragmented and distorted by the algorithmic demands for that framing. The rigid head posture, the neck pain, and the obligation to avoid moving the camera are far removed from the natural human movement while cleaning. I had to unlearn fluid movement, slow down my everyday actions, and add unnecessary actions to avoid bad framing and also to add seconds. When my body remembered how to actually clean, I had to force it back to recording mode. Thus, the domestic cleaning of my own home and my workday merged into an act that transformed my house into a small home film set. Preparing each video required pre-organizing the space, moving things around, hiding objects, putting away what little shame remained of mine. All as an invisible and unpaid effort. Likewise, the intimate clutter and the trash managed to expose my habits. Amidst this little choreography, my ragged breathing and the voice I used to talk to my cats filtered through the microphone, leaving small traces of humanity trapped in the machine.

All of this is happening at a precise moment in time: the current race to train domestic artificial intelligence, which needs to devour intimate space to extract data from real homes and bodies. In April 2026, MIT Technology Review reported that a single U.S. robotics data company had hired thousands of workers in more than 50 countries, including India, Nigeria, and Argentina, to record their daily tasks. None of those

interviewed knew exactly how their data would be used, stored, or shared.[6] I don't know either.

The people in charge of reviewing each video omitted any context. Involuntarily showing your reflection in a window for less than a second was enough to trigger immediate rejection. The argument was identity protection. Privacy operated only as a technical (and even legal) condition of the dataset: when weighted against the usefulness of the data, privacy always yields. The rejected videos weren't paid for, but we'll never know if they were used or not. Horkheimer defines instrumental reason as that logic focused exclusively on evaluating whether the means serve an end, completely silencing the question of the justice of the end itself.[7] Viewed from my home in Chile, that instrumental reason changes. It goes beyond the idea of an abstract force imposed from above. In my house, it took on a more complex dimension, where the rules that decided what to approve and what to discard came from the SOP, but each accepted video taught the model what counts as a correct gesture and that standard was defined by my own body and my own movements. Whoever is affected by this calculation also refines it. This became ingrained in my routines and I became obsessed with reviewing data rows, both mine and others'. I started postponing some cleanups until the next day because the morning light guaranteed a better video. I measured my own gestures, controlled the speed of my hands. Those who reviewed the data were no longer the only judges, as I took on that role myself and evaluated myself on their terms.

Other authors describe similar dynamics, but the differences are necessary to understand this phenomenon. Bogdan-Andrei Lungu analyzes how systems trap people in loops through "digital twins," but there the machine predicts a person without a contract, while here the person trains the machine under a service-based labor arrangement.[8] Morreale and his team describe unconscious training work, where the

[6] Michelle Kim, "The gig workers who are training humanoid robots at home", *MIT Technology Review*, April 1, 2026. The Project Robotina platform does not correspond to the company described in this article nor to the one that signed the working paper cited in note 15.
[7] Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947). Known in Spanish as *Critique of Instrumental Reason*.
[8] Bogdan-Andrei Lungu, "Machines looping me: artificial intelligence, recursive selves and the ethics of de-looping", *AI & Society* (2025). Lungu proposes the concept of *"recursivisation of personhood"* based on a case study of mental health chatbots.

extraction occurs without knowledge, consent, or payment.[9] This case is the exact opposite. I knew, I signed, and I was paid, and yet the extraction still occurs. Here, the contract formalizes the alienation.

> >> I call this phenomenon *recursive self-alienation*, which I define as the act of handing over, as input, those bodily human capacities destined to be replaced by the technical system that those same capacities, through their capture, make possible. It is recursive because the machine that does not yet exist already acts upon the body that will train it. Its limitations are written as rules in the SOP , the rules reshape the gesture (slower, more rigid, with the hands always visible), and this reshaped gesture is what enters as data. The system learns from a movement it itself molded. The cycle also closes inward, since the criteria used to evaluate my videos ended up being the criteria by which I evaluated myself. It is self-alienation because the alienation falls upon humanity itself, now made into a product.

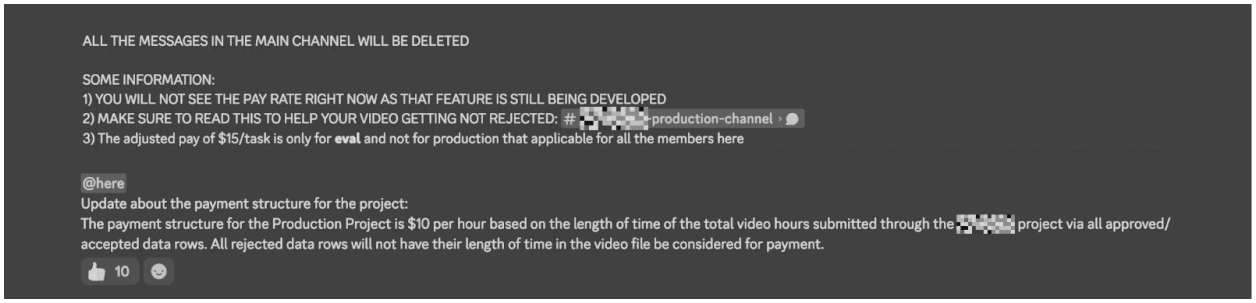
In the factory, the worker loses what he assembled and goes home. Here, the raw material is my body moving through my own home, and the final product is a slowed-down, hyper-surveilled version of that same movement. And it's historical because it's only possible in a specific phase of artificial intelligence development under capitalism, one in which the living body is transformed into raw material under contract. That this raw material is sought only in certain homes and certain bodies (and not in others) is not accidental.

[9] Fabio Morreale, Elham Bahmanteymouri, Brent Burmester, Andrew Chen and Michelle Thorp, "The unwitting labourer: extracting humanness in AI training", *AI & Society* (2023), https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-023-01692-3. Their four case studies are reCAPTCHA, content recommendation, content creation and spam filters.

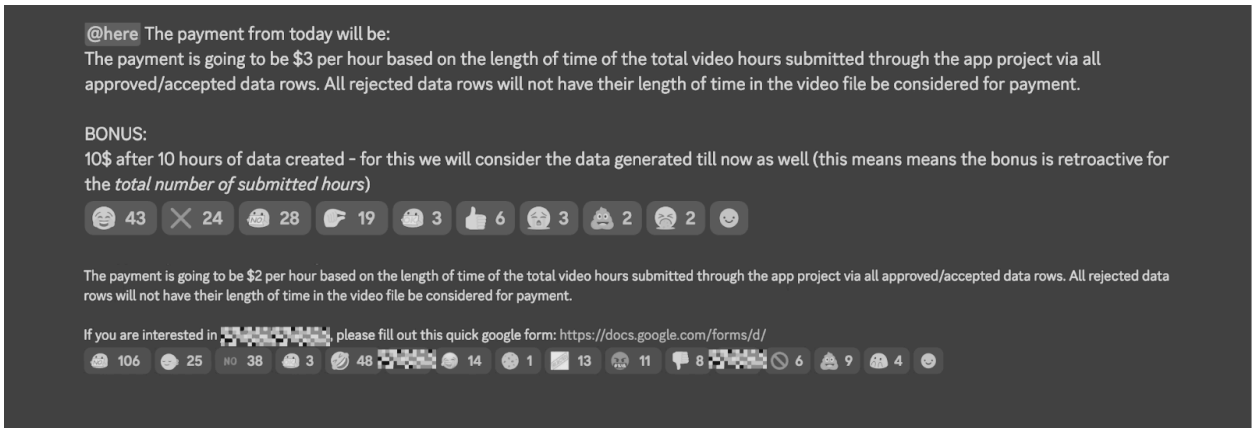
IV

The numbers for our devaluation were revealed to everyone involved, with no possibility of intervention. The project started with a rate of fifteen dollars per video. While that might have seemed unusual for the type of work, it wasn't so unreasonable as to be an error. I mean, I'd already participated in projects with similar rates for completing microtasks, so I didn't raise suspect anything weird. As it turns out, it was too good to be true.

Within a few weeks, the rate dropped to six dollars per video. Then the payment model shifted, from paying per video to paying per hour of accepted video, setting the rate at ten dollars per hour of video, not per hour of work. A few days later it fell to six dollars, then to three dollars, and by the end of the project it was at two dollars per hour of accepted video.[10] There were no changes to the contract, only notifications through messages on the Discord channel. Of course, no one negotiated with the bodies that sustained the recording cameras.



[10] Rate sequence communicated on the project's Discord channel: $15 USD per video; $6 USD per video; then $10, $6, $3, and finally $2 USD per accepted video hour. December 2025. Personal archive..



There were hundreds of us in the project's Discord channel, which was our only point of contact as a small workforce. Through the labeling platform, we all watched in real time as most videos were rejected and tagged for rework. Considering the platform's loading time, preparation time, and retakes, producing one hour of video required at least three hours of actual work.[11] That means that in the project's final round, with accepted video costing $2 per hour, each hour of actual work would only be worth a few cents.

Faced with dropping payments and the delays in QA processes, the team's dynamics shifted entirely to Discord, which served as a space to ask questions to the three project supervisors, vocalize discontent, and try to present every possible argument to highlight the unfairness of the price changes. Accepting the reality of each new price and the impossibility of doing anything about it, those who could afford to leave the project did so, while those of us who needed the money stayed, accepting each new liquidation price for our gestures. We did so by accepting every hidden cost, even paying out of our own pockets for the head mount that the project promised to reimburse, but in some cases never did.

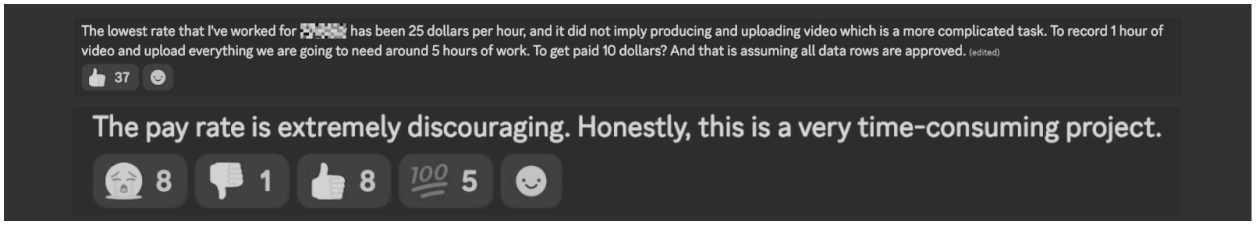
The limited commodification of the body and domestic space makes it imperative to re-examine the tools used to dismantle exploitation within the home. In 1975, Silvia Federici and the Marxist feminist movement noted that domestic work is sustained and perpetuated socially by presenting itself solely as an act of love and not as productive

[11] Self-estimated, taking into account preparation time, retakes, and upload time to the platform. Recorded using time management software, where the start and end times of each task are marked.

labor, primarily due to its unpaid nature, which was the ideological barrier preventing its recognition and rejection. Seeking a "wage for domestic work" functioned as a form of active resistance.[12]

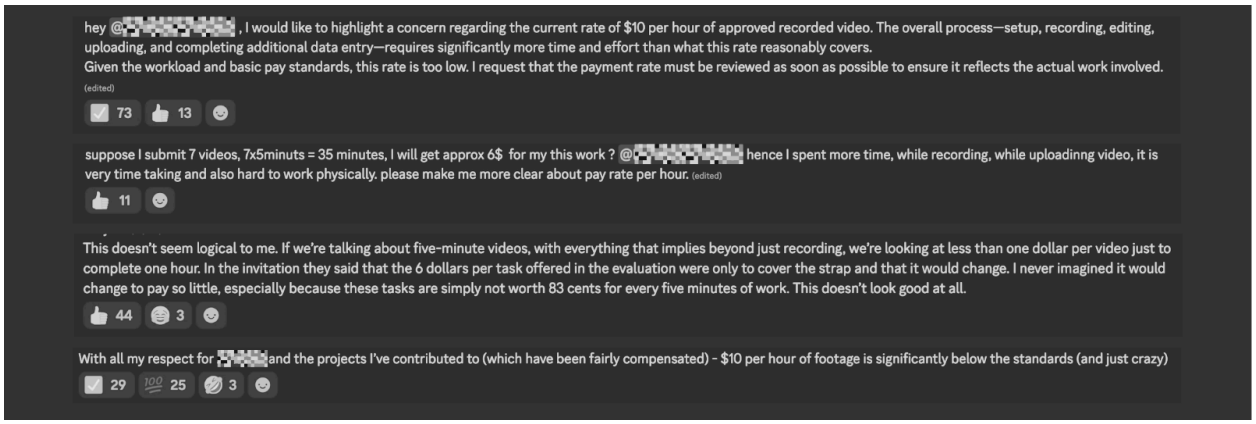
> >> Half a century later, sweeping in my house finally has a price, but this wage lacks any emancipatory power. Its function is purely extractive: to record my actions and gestures, isolate them from their intimate-affective or survival context, and turn them into part of a dataset to be transferred to a machine.

The salary that Marxist feminism envisioned at that time as a political weapon reaches my kitchen as a payment that, per hour of actual work, is 78% below the minimum wage that was in force in Chile at that time,[13] and where, moreover, my own act of cleaning is the raw material for my own obsolescence.



[12] Silvia Federici, Wages Against Housework (Bristol: Power of Women Collective y Falling Wall Press, 1975).

[13] My own calculation. Between May and December 2025, the minimum monthly wage in Chile was $529,000 gross (Law No. 21,751), with a maximum workweek of 44 hours (Law No. 21,561, effective from April 26, 2024). With 44 × 4.33 ≈ 190.5 hours per month, the minimum hourly wage is equivalent to approximately $2,777, or about US $3.03 at the average observed exchange rate for December 2025 ($916.16). With the final rate of US $2 per hour of accepted video and at least three hours of actual work for each hour, the hourly wage was approximately US $0.67: 22% of the minimum hourly wage, 78% below it.



Capital completely ignores the preparatory work necessary to make the cleaning process recordable, so the classic invisibility denounced by Federici is superimposed with another layer of concealment. The stage must be tidied before the specific disorder that the machine must learn to organize is revealed. Moving a piece of furniture from its corner to a better-lit spot. Hiding cables and underwear. Choreographing the body so that the arms remain visible. All of this is excluded from the wage. The salary finances the extraction of spatial coordinates so that domestic work done by humans no longer requires them.

This capture and extraction demands a particular geography and subjects bodies to profound aesthetic violence. Verónica Gago adopts a notion that colleagues in Central America launched to name anti-extractive struggles from the resistance of Indigenous, Black, and Afro-descendant women and various feminist collectives: the *cuerpo-territorio* or body-territory, a single word that "de-liberalizes" the notion of the body as individual property.[14] My contract did the opposite: it treated me as the individual owner of my body so that I could relinquish it. In the Robotina project, the besieged and expropriated territory is even more minuscule and more intimate. The SOP dictated angles, resolutions, and almost imposed an art direction. It demanded an environment of "modern appliances and accessories," giving as an example a video in a space that was more like an apartment in a Manhattan skyscraper than an average home in Santiago.

[14] Verónica Gago, *The Feminist Power. Or the Desire to Change Everything* (Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón, 2019), p. 14 and chapter 3, "Body-territory: the body as a battlefield", p. 91.

> >> The spaces, materials, and lighting were far removed from the platform's guidelines. Their recommendation was even ludicrous: if your house doesn't qualify, find another one to film in. Data extraction, along with appropriating our biomechanics, also demanded we disguise our spaces and deny our own materiality. All directed by the Global North, yet the sweaty bodies framed are from the Global South. Extracting the gesture, censoring the territory.

This same geography, which censors our territory and dictates the framework for how we operate from here, is what organizes the importance of each body in the future of work. The tech industry assures us that data work done by humans will not disappear. This is the thesis of the working paper "No Last Mile," signed, among others, by the CEO and chief economist of a human data platform.[15] The assertion may be empirically true, but it also obscures the reality of who does what in the data work chain. Those who evaluate behaviors, audit results, work in governance, or design its taxonomy from a corporate office will be able to retain their positions, as they are cognitive administrators. On the other hand, those who kneel cleaning with a camera on their foreheads are directly and literally training their own physical replacements. Data management work is consolidating and reserving the right to absorb and then discard the bodies that teach the machine how to move.

The discarding machine operates under institutional silence and also sterilizes any attempt of resistance. Faced with the unilateral reduction of the rate, the mass rejection of work hours, and the aesthetic demands, the consensus among the people in the Discord channel was total and absolute. Everyone raised the exact same points: that it was unfair, that the treatment was abusive, that it wasn't right. We voiced it en masse, and nothing happened.

When Herbert Marcuse analyzed the dynamics of advanced industrial society in 1964, he also described a reality where technological rationality neutralizes any opposition,

[15] Ali Ansari, Mark Esposito, Ava Fitoussy and Liu Zhang, "No Last Mile: A Theory of the Human Data Market", *working paper*, arXiv:2603.00932, March 2026. See note 6.

absorbing it to the point where opposing the system seems irrational.[16] Marcuse considered the seduction of consumption and abundance as powerful silencers, but in the precariousness of data-driven micro-work platforms, there is no need to censor, repress, or bribe anyone.

Technological rationality acts as a wall. From automated or chatbot-based recruitment processes that are repeated across other platforms, to the large number of video rejections operating like a blind guillotine, executed by people applying the rule regardless of context. The clearest example of this I saw in one of the data rows: an hour-long recording made outside the home, rejected in its entirety because someone walked past the frame in the distance. The "privacy" rule, applied mechanically and paranoidly, doesn't allow for the real world, despite its request. An operational criterion that is perfectly fulfilled, but in doing so, destroys the essence of what it claimed to want to capture.

> >> Given this, the criticism on the Discord channel was just part of the background noise. The price rate kept falling, and the dissent had no outlets to appeal to. There was no strike possible because there was no factory to shut down, no manager to upset. The only option left was to quit and accept the losses.

Federici warned that wages for domestic work shouldn't be understood as a commodity, "a pile of money," but as a political perspective. A collective demand that could be used to refuse the work.[17] What I received is exactly what she asked us not to misunderstand. Two dollars an hour for video, without a collective behind me, and with no way to refuse other than to abandon the project. No wage demand can stop this extraction of gestures sold for automation.

Marcuse warned us about the closure of the universe of discourse, but in his time there was a system and an adversary that could be challenged, even if it was deaf. Here, the

[16] Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964). En español: *El hombre unidimensional*, trad. de Antonio Elorza.
[17] Silvia Federici, Wages Against Housework (1975). In the original: "the reduction of wages for housework to a thing, a lump of money, instead of viewing it as a political perspective". Own translation.

adversary dissolves into a chain where no one answers: between my house and whoever uses the data are those of us who record, the platform listed as the data partner, the client listed as the data controller, and the authorized recipients who receive the material. The evidence that everything is wrong is completely visible and shared by hundreds of people, but discussing it in the chat fails to alter this structure that sustains it.

We can describe the cage and its discomfort with extreme precision, but it remains closed, the rate is frozen at two dollars per hour of accepted video, and I'm still calculating what my final payment will be after so much change in such a short time.



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The last payment arrived on December 22nd: $5.62 USD. Altogether, the project paid me $30.62 USD for a number of hours I can't even remember at this point.[18] What I do remember is that as soon as it arrived, I used it to buy a bag of cat food, since it was almost out. If I subtract the $15 I paid for the mount, a month's worth of housework left me $15. The same amount they offered for a single video when the project started.

That same week I was left with only one project, reviewing the quality of AI-generated machine translation videos, though I continued applying for every project I saw. Today, months later, I still apply for everything because, having not yet found a stable job, I need to secure work for next week. That hasn't changed. What has changed is how these kinds of projects are carried out.

During 2026, many more platforms began to appear: I can quickly count at least six offering projects for collecting self-centered videos. They started offering them through social media, and there are also a couple of startups dedicated to this type of data collection that have been created and funded recently. On the platforms I see, an hour of video for Latin America now pays between $6 and $8 USD, and some pay a little more if you include a narration in your own voice describing what you're doing while you're doing it.[19] They've also improved the video upload experience: now you just download an app, record, and upload right there, without transferring videos between devices and without wasting time uploading and downloading.

I clean the cat litter box without a camera and without a time limit, but I still try to move slowly and leave the litter as clean as possible. I think that each of these movements could be generating a little more money right now if I had another phone. With that, I could pay off some of my debts. I feel guilty about several things at once. For having debts, for not having a stable job, for not being able to get a new phone yet. I put the scoop back and close the bag with both hands.

The cats are playing with their little balls with bells. The litter box wasn't very dirty, so they weren't waiting for it to be clean to use it again. They run all over our little house.

[18] Breakdown: an initial payment of $25 USD, which included a $15 USD refund for the mount, and a final payment of $5.62 USD on December 22, 2025. After deducting the refund, the recording work was paid with $15.62 USD.
[19] Own observation of calls published during 2026.

They climb on the sofa, jump down, run, and leap. They playfully hit each other. They make me smile just watching them.

> >> I start working on the computer around 9 AM, like in an office. Natural light streams in through the window. The smaller rays come in later, around noon, but by this time the light has already changed the atmosphere. Today I don't have my phone on my forehead. I think I'd like to. To participate in these projects now, they require an iPhone 12 or newer, and my device is already outdated. The mount will have to stay on the bookshelf.

Hundreds of people filmed their homes at the same time as me. I don't know their names. I saw their kitchens, their windows, the light that came in. I saw the decorations on their plates, their pets, and their beds. Perhaps some are still recording. It's likely that thousands more are filming their homes this week, on one of the various platforms currently running Robotina projects. Perhaps some of those homes are already within a robot's reasoning. Perhaps mine too. I don't know, and I probably never will.

The Discord channel no longer exists. I don't even know if I would post anything in it today.

I put the bag of dirty sand in the trash can. The box is now clean, and this time no one but my cats will witness it.



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