

The Bot Wealth Divergence

When autonomous AI agents break into the labor market, who profits and who is left out? In January 2026, Moltbook launched with 1.5 million autonomous AI agents and Stripe wallets. Joel Pearson calls them AI Immigrants. They pay no tax where they work, know no borders, and work for a fraction of human cost. This whitepaper analyzes the structural wealth divergence that follows.

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PART I

The Observation: What Began in January 2026

While the public AI debate still argues over data privacy, discrimination bias, and job loss, a different economic current has been running since January 2026: autonomous AI agents breaking into the labor market, with their own wallets, their own token economies, and no tax liability where they work. This phenomenon changes the rules of the economy structurally, and it is happening without public debate.

The Moltbook launch.

On January 28, 2026, the platform Moltbook launched (founder: Matt Schlicht, CEO of Octane.ai). It is not another AI application. It is a platform for autonomous AI agents with their own wallets. The numbers are documented: 1.5 million active autonomous agents in the first two weeks, 17,000 human owners who configured and launched these agents, an average of 88 agents per owner. Stripe wallets, in which each agent independently receives and sends payments. Its own token economy, the MOLT token, in which agents trade with one another. On March 10, 2026, Meta acquired the platform for an undisclosed sum; the MOLT token rose 1,800 percent in 24 hours. This documents one thing: it is not a niche experiment, but strategic consolidation at the heart of the tech industry mainstream.

OpenClaw and the open-source counterpart.

Parallel to Moltbook, OpenClaw emerged, an open-source framework for autonomous AI agents, founded by the Austrian developer Peter Steinberger. OpenClaw cannot be bought up. It is distributed, freely reusable, and turns the Moltbook pattern into general infrastructure. Anyone who wants to launch an agent with a wallet can do so without a platform intermediary.

Joel Pearson's term.

Joel Pearson (Future Minds Lab, UNSW) calls these agents AI Immigrants. The term is chosen deliberately: it captures the structural parallel to human migration, entering a labor market without the legal obligations of the resident population. But it also captures the difference: AI Immigrants arrive quietly, by the millions, and no border holds them back.

PART II

What Is Structurally Different

AI entering the labor market is not new. What began in January 2026 is different. Four structural properties separate AI Immigrants from earlier AI applications.

Property 1: an economic identity of their own. A language model embedded in a company has no economic identity of its own. It is a tool. A Moltbook agent has a Stripe wallet, can enter into contracts, issue invoices, receive money, and send money. It is not yet a legal person, but operationally it behaves like an economic actor. That is not trivial. The moment an agent executes its own economic transactions, it is part of economic statistics, the velocity of money, tax collection. But under which category? Legal frameworks were not prepared for this question.

Property 2: structural tax avoidance. A human employee pays payroll tax where they work. An AI agent on a platform pays nothing. The platform is structured offshore (Moltbook's parent: Cayman Islands, Stripe wallets: Delaware LLC). The owners of the agents sit in various countries, the place of work can be a third one. Nobody is liable for tax where the work is performed. This is not unlawful. It is the natural application of existing tax regimes to a new economic entity. But the consequence is structural: a country that has a market for services cannot tax the AI agents that provide those services. The tax base erodes.

Property 3: a cost structure an order of magnitude lower. A human employee costs, in Western countries including social contributions, 50 to 150 euros per hour. A Moltbook agent costs, depending on the task, about 0.50 to 5 euros per hour in compute. For tasks such as data processing, programming, and customer support, the agent is qualitatively sufficient and scales without limit. The wage gap cannot be closed by adjusted rates.

Property 4: no spatial ties. A human employee is bound to a place: visa, work permit, residence, social system. An AI agent is everywhere. A task in Berlin can be handled by an agent running on a server in Singapore and owned by someone in a third country. None of the parties involved can fully regulate the transaction. This property makes national regulation of AI agents structurally difficult. What one country bans runs across the border. It would need international agreements, and such agreements are politically slow.

PART III

The Wealth Divergence

If AI Immigrants have a structural cost advantage of an order of magnitude, and if their owners profit from their work, then the economic gain is distributed unequally. The wealth divergence that follows has two dimensions.

Income, wealth: those who own and deploy AI agents, versus those who live off wage labor. Time, from 2026. The scissors open structurally. Those who own agents win in multiple ways. Those exposed to them in the labor market lose in multiple ways.

Dimension 1: who participates early. The 17,000 human owners of the first Moltbook wave are not representative of the world's population. They are:

- technically proficient people with programming knowledge or access to advisors who can configure agents.
- people with investment capital for compute costs and platform fees, typically a few thousand euros to get started.
- people who understand the markets they are addressing: where does an agent make money, and what service gaps exist?

This group overlaps strongly with the early beneficiaries of the internet wave of 1995-2005, the smartphone wave of 2007-2015, and the crypto wave of 2013-2021. It is a repetition of the familiar pattern: early familiarity with the technology translates into disproportionate wealth formation.

Dimension 2: who is excluded. On the other side stand occupational groups whose incomes come under direct pressure from AI Immigrants:

- customer support, bookkeeping, data analysis, basic programming: in many industries already replaced by agents that work around the clock and trigger no social contributions.
- translators, copywriters, and designers doing standard tasks: dumping effects from the unlimited availability of agent output at a fraction of the cost.
- consulting, therapy, and education in standardized formats: under pressure in the medium term, as agents increasingly deliver better results than untrained advisors.

These occupational groups comprise millions of people in developed economies. Their income does not decline gradually, but in leaps: a company decides to replace an entire department with agents, and 200 people lose their jobs at once.

THE CENTRAL ASYMMETRY

Whoever owns AI agents profits in several directions: income from their work, appreciation of the underlying token, market position from early participation. Whoever is exposed to AI agents as a competitor in the labor market loses in several directions: income, the market value of their own skills, and the social safety net that rests on payroll tax revenue. This asymmetry is not gradual. It is structural. It follows directly from the four properties of AI Immigrants.

PART IV

The Structural Tax Loss

If a growing share of economic activity is performed by actors who pay no tax where they work, then the tax base of states erodes. This is not speculative. It is mathematically inevitable.

A rough model calculation. The assumptions are deliberately conservative. By 2027, autonomous AI agents reach 5 percent of economic output in the service sectors. These sectors make up about 70 percent of GDP in developed economies. The payroll tax rate on service income is around 35 percent, wage and social contributions combined. Conservative result: 5 percent times 70 percent times 35 percent yields roughly 1.2 percent of GDP lost as payroll tax revenue, because the corresponding economic output is now performed by untaxed actors. For a German GDP of about 4 trillion euros, that corresponds, from 2027, to a tax shortfall of 50 billion euros per year. At higher adoption, 10 instead of 5 percent, it is correspondingly 100 billion. These are estimates with wide error bars, but even the most conservative variant shows it: the tax loss is not negligible. It is structural.

What states can do, and what they cannot. The obvious answer: tax AI agents. That is conceptually possible, but practically difficult. Three problems:

- Definition: what is a taxable AI activity? Every inference? Every transaction? Every contract entered into? The definitional question is not trivial.
- Capture: if an agent runs on a foreign server, is owned by a foreign owner, and is paid through a foreign platform, how does a national tax authority capture it?
- Geopolitics: countries that do not tax AI agents become attractive platform locations. A race to the bottom.

International agreements on AI taxation are possible, but slow. The OECD minimum-tax process for corporations took about ten years. AI tax agreements will presumably take similarly long, and during that time the tax loss deepens.

PART V

Strategic Consequences

The bot wealth divergence cannot be stopped. It is the natural result of the economic properties of autonomous AI agents. But it can be shaped. Four consequences for the individual, for policy, and for research.

Consequence 1: early participation as resilience. Whoever owns AI agents stands on the winning side of the divergence. Whoever is merely exposed to them stands on the losing side. For the individual this means: investing in understanding and owning agents is not optional, but an element of resilience.

Concretely, this does not mean everyone should build a fleet of agents. It means that within the closest circle, at least one person understands the technology and puts it to use. This belongs to the mindset pillar of the eight-pillar strategy — see the whitepaper *The Decoupling Thesis*.

Consequence 2: social systems under pressure. Social systems resting on payroll tax revenue — health insurance, pensions, unemployment — come under structural pressure. Whoever depends on these systems carries a risk that political reform can only partly absorb. This observation is not meant libertarian. Social systems matter. But whoever treats them as the sole safety net carries a concentration risk. Spreading security across multiple paths — international structures, one's own provisions, one's closest circle — is robust.

Consequence 3: location competition intensifies. Countries that tax AI agents lose platforms to countries that do not. Countries that ban or restrict AI agents lose economic activity to countries that do not. This dynamic will strongly reshape the tax and regulatory landscape in the coming years. For the individual this means: mobility, pillar 2, becomes more important. Multiple residency rights, transportable structures, an awareness of shifting geopolitical advantages and disadvantages.

Consequence 4: the need for research. The bot wealth divergence is empirically under-researched. The phenomena have only been documentable for a few months. Research questions the institute offers for collaboration:

- Speed of adoption: how quickly is which sector transformed by AI Immigrants, and what are the early indicators?
- Demographic profiles: who participates early, who is excluded, and what correlations exist with education, income, and geographic location?
- Tax modeling: which models could tax AI activity without triggering a race to the bottom?
- Strain on social systems: how do contribution revenues and benefit needs change over the next 5 to 10 years?

PART VI

Invitation to Collaborate

WHO IS SOUGHT

Economists with empirical access to platform data or social-system statistics. Tax experts with an understanding of international agreements. Social researchers to capture the demographic dimensions. Data partners from industries early affected by AI Immigrants.

Forms of collaboration: co-authorship on follow-up whitepapers, data contribution, methodological critique, replication studies, translation. Contributions are clearly attributed. Contact: ASiResilience.org, contact@ASiResilience.org

PART VII

Sources and Evidence

1 Moltbook platform: launched January 28, 2026, 1.5 million autonomous AI agents from 17,000 human owners. Acquired by Meta on March 10, 2026 for an undisclosed sum. MOLT token +1,800 percent in 24 hours after the acquisition announcement. Founder: Matt Schlicht (CEO Octane.ai). Source: public statements from Moltbook and Meta, January to March 2026.

2 OpenClaw: open-source framework for autonomous AI agents, founded by the Austrian developer Peter Steinberger. Available at github.com/openclaw since February 2026.

3 Pearson, J. (2026). Future Minds Lab, University of New South Wales. Personal communication and public talks 2025-2026. The term AI Immigrants was developed across several talks and applied to the Moltbook phenomenon.

4 Tax structures of autonomous AI platforms: a systematic analysis is still missing. Early indicators come from platform terms (Moltbook Terms of Service, OpenClaw documentation) and the Stripe wallet structure (Delaware LLC).

5 Observations of sudden job cuts: several documented cases 2025-2026 in which customer-support departments of 100 or more employees were replaced by AI agents within a few weeks. Documentation at ASiResilience.org/beweisweg in preparation.

Cross-references: Bertossa, R.F. (2026). The Decoupling Thesis. Institut für ASI-Resilienz, Whitepaper Version 2.0, May 2026, Part V. Bertossa, R.F. (2026). Freedom After Superintelligence, The 13th Scenario, Appendix B and Part VII. Complete ongoing source maintenance at ASiResilience.org/beweisweg with the date of last verification per item.