

WASTING TIME, WASTING YOUTH

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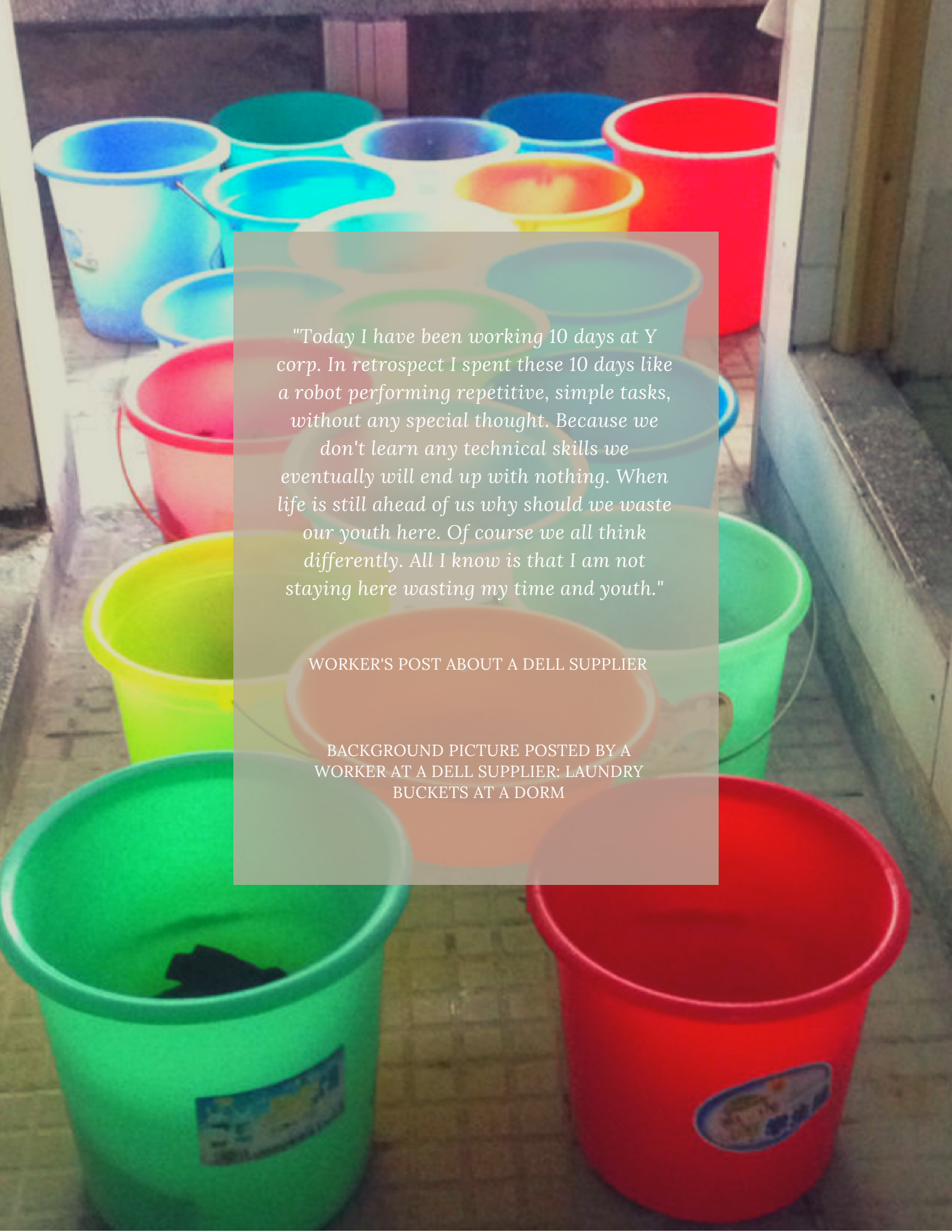
WORKERS' GRIEVANCES FROM FOUR DELL SUPPLIERS IN CHINA



Authors: Stefan Brehm & Helena Magnusson

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"Today I have been working 10 days at Y corp. In retrospect I spent these 10 days like a robot performing repetitive, simple tasks, without any special thought. Because we don't learn any technical skills we eventually will end up with nothing. When life is still ahead of us why should we waste our youth here. Of course we all think differently. All I know is that I am not staying here wasting my time and youth."

WORKER'S POST ABOUT A DELL SUPPLIER

BACKGROUND PICTURE POSTED BY A
WORKER AT A DELL SUPPLIER: LAUNDRY
BUCKETS AT A DORM



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ii. social@risk™ case study

workers' grievances at four Dell suppliers in China

In 2013 the Danish watch organisation DanWatch conducted an investigation into the working conditions at four Chinese electronics manufacturers supplying Dell. The report titled "IT workers still pay the price for cheap computers" gained public attention [2]. In 2014 an investigative documentary (Kalla Fakta) in Sweden criticised the Stockholm County Council (SLL) that it had renewed a public procurement agreement to purchase Dell computers via Atea, a Norwegian IT infrastructure provider, despite apparent problems within Dell's supply chain [see annex 01].

In response the County Council embarked on a comprehensive review of its human rights policies and social due diligence. Electronics Watch compiled an account and analysis of these efforts [3]. On 9. September 2015 SLL stated in a press release that "Dell has improved its work to ensure social responsibility" and, therefore, will allow Atea to supply Dell products.

Among the lessons learned from this case Electronics Watch concludes:

Public buyers need capacity to verify factories' compliance with human rights and labour rights standards independently of the industry and through engagement with workers.

Human rights due diligence in the supply chain must result in better conditions for workers. Workers themselves are the best source of information about the outcomes of due diligence processes.

In May 2017 Stockholm County Council received an Outstanding Case Study Award for its efforts with Dell [4]. From our perspective this is an ideal time to follow up on what has changed. We took the above-mentioned DanWatch report as a starting point. It provided us with the names of four factory sites and a list of labour rights violations from 2013 that we could use as a benchmark for our investigation of working conditions in 2016.

In line with Electronic Watch's conclusion the main principle of this study is to use workers' voices as a source of information. The evaluation criteria are result-based, i.e. we assess whether working conditions at the four manufacturing sites have improved since 2015. It is important to note that our study is not an attempt to replicate the DanWatch study because the methods applied are different.

This study does not follow a standard auditing report because we wanted to focus on the validation of social@risk™ as a tool. Practically this means that we didn't contrast workers' grievances with relevant laws, or codes of conduct. Nevertheless the findings can be interpreted and used in the same way as a social audit. We hope that this study provides new impulses to enter the next phase of improving working conditions in the IT supply chain.

iii. main findings

The findings of this report suggest that the labour issues that the 2013 DanWatch report mentions still pre-vail in 2016. In addition we find a number of previously unknown rights' violations. The following is a summary of our results:

1. Already when workers look for employment they risk to be cheated by job market agents. Job seekers have to pay fees in order to receive an offer. There is also a risk that agents sell the same position to many candidates or announce recruitment campaigns for fake-firms.
2. There are three common forms of discrimination: a.) factories hire mainly female workers, b.) workers beyond the age of 40-45 have no possibility to find a job, c.) employment conditions for dispatch workers are inferior compared to regular workers.
3. Workers are subjected to harsh disciplinary rules and arbitrary treatment of despotic managers.
4. Wages are low and sometimes are not sufficient to satisfy basic needs such as food.
5. Workers report about up to 130 overtime hours a month. Workers have no choice but to accept overtime assignments.
6. Workers do not know where they can turn to when they have a work related problem and hotline numbers do not work.
7. Workers are forced to wait for their turn when they want to quit. They are held back from leaving the factory for up to 6 months.
8. Students that are sent by their schools for internships are not informed about their work tasks, contract, or payment. Sometimes wages are paid to teachers and students won't receive any wage.
9. The hygienic standards at the dorms are low and workers are forced to shift in-between dorms in order to prevent the formation of close social ties and worker solidarity.
10. Workers talk about psychological stress, loneliness, and anxieties. There are pictures, and reports about a suicide.
11. Workers are exposed to prolonged standing. The work pace is so fast that there is no time to drink, or go to the toilet. Many workers speak about extreme tiredness, which increases the risk for accidents.

iv. about social@risk™

social@risk™ is an alternative, big-data driven approach to measure and implement responsible business conduct. Every day workers and other stakeholders in developing countries write about their grievances on social media in order to protest, reach out for help, seek advice, or share experiences. Our tool social@risk™ collects these voices. We use artificial intelligence and other algorithms in combination with expert validation to structure this information. In the future, social@risk™ will use millions of posts from tens of thousands of factory sites as the basis for predicting social risks associated with a supplier, industry, and/or location. social@risk™ identifies, quantifies, and predicts the likely occurrence of social risk types. It is the first grievance-based risk management approach on the market. The ultimate purpose is to generate predictive insights that allow for pro-active social engagement and rights protection.

In principle social@risk™ can be used as a substitute or complement to on-site audits. The main innovation, however, is its fundamentally different approach to social risk management. The conventional auditing system requires corrective action of violations reported in inspection protocols. In practice, this means that social risk mitigation

does not depend on the likelihood of a violation to occur but on the odds of a non-compliant factory being selected for an audit multiplied by the likelihood that the audit detects the violation in question and reports it. As a result of current approaches to social risk mitigation regularly suffer from misspecification and underestimation.

social@risk™ offers several advantages:

- Pro-active instead of re-active rights protection.
- Comprehensive social risk management of all suppliers instead of small random samples.
- Detailed, fact-based insights that allow formulating effective engagement strategies.
- Dynamic assessments instead of one-time visits.
- No dependence on supplier self-assessments, or need to negotiate the terms of an on-site inspection (access to the factory, interviews, availability of documents, etc.)
- No risks involved for workers or inspectors that unveil rights-violating practices.

v. methodological approach

The core methodological issue for the collection and analysis of online voices is authenticity; i.e. how certain are we that a claim is made by a worker employed at a specified factory site? The answer to this question is not a binary yes or no but a graduated evaluation ranging from unlikely to most likely. We use two approaches to evaluate authenticity.

Direct authenticity: Firstly we assess the level of detail that a user reveals. To this end, we reviewed thousands of posts and identified verbal markers that structure specialised knowledge or insights. The authenticity of a claim is more likely when a user connected to many markers posts it. This approach takes advantage of the fact that also workers have a need to evaluate the credibility of information. Revealing details that only an insider can know is a common way to establish trust while at the same time remaining anonymous.

Indirect authenticity: Secondly, we relate authenticity not only to the number of markers but also to information

embeddedness. When users cannot be categorised as authentic their information still can be credible if authentic users relate to it. Here we assume that workers have a better understanding of what constitutes an authentic piece of information.

We detail our authenticity approach with a comparison of two samples (1 & 2) out of the four factory sites.

Exhibits 1 (sample 1) and 2 (sample 2) show different direct authenticity marker distributions. In the first case, about 50 percent of the users reveal at least five authenticity markers, and about 10 percent are attributed to 20 or more markers. The total post sample size for this sample is about 1000. By contrast sample 2 consists of about 4000 posts. Only 15 percent of all users dispose of 5 or more markers and the top 10 percent are connected to 10 or more authenticity characteristics. Thus from this perspective, the first sample provides relatively more direct authentic information than the second sample despite its much smaller size.

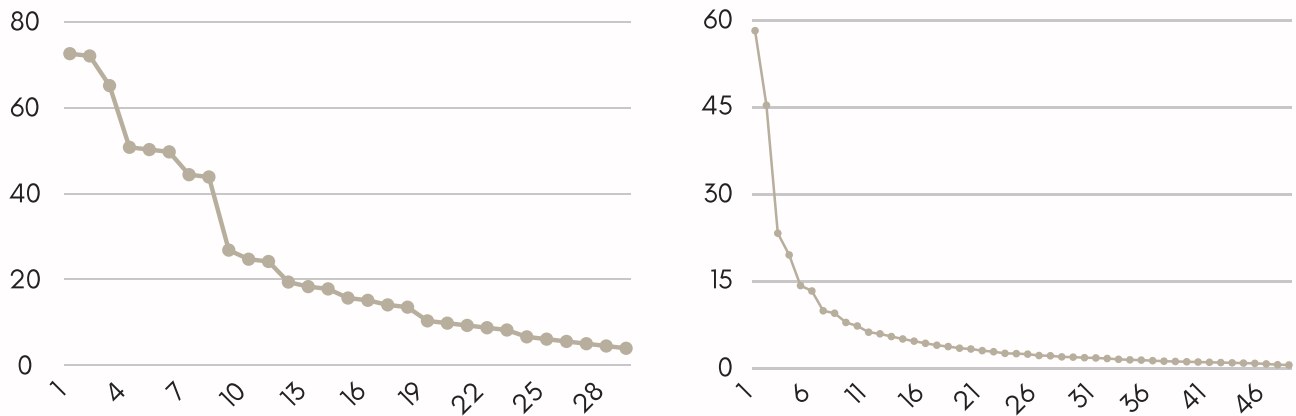


exhibit 1 (left) & 2 (right): number of authentic users in relation to number of authenticity markers (percent)

Indirect authenticity favours large samples as the visualisations in exhibits 3 (sample 1) and 4 (sample 2) demonstrate. The green areas represent authentic voices while the blue dots relate to posts of users that do not reveal sufficient detailed information. In the first case, posts are dispersed and there is a low degree of interconnectedness. Hence authentic users provide only little credibility to other users. Sample 2, by contrast, is denser so that authentic users provide more weight to other users.

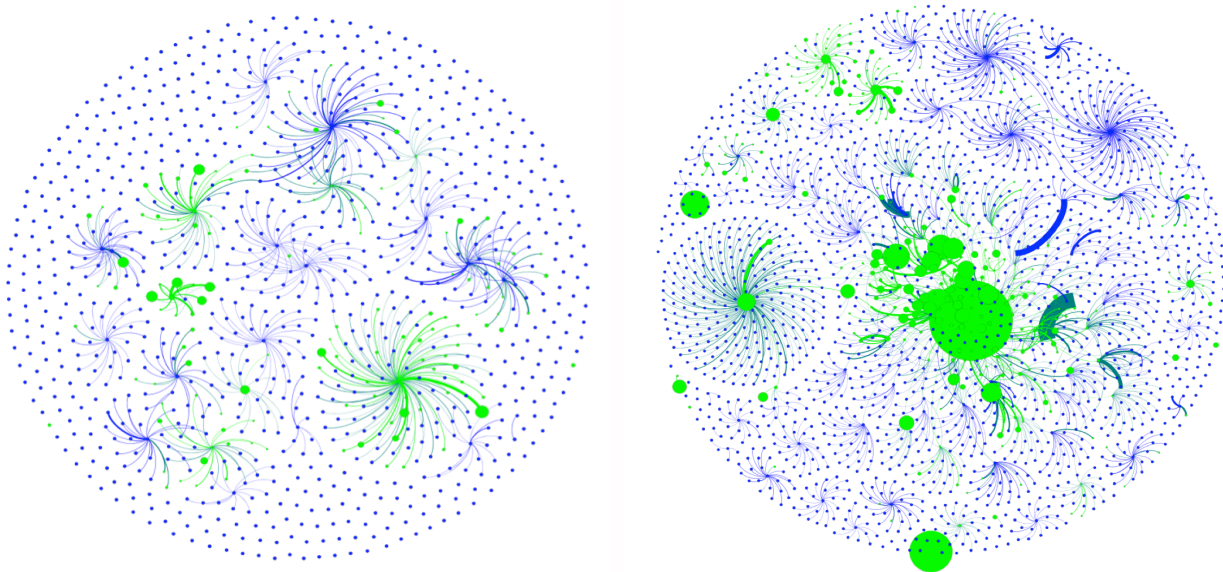


exhibit 3 (left) & 4 (right): visualisation of embedded authenticity; green areas represent direct authenticity

vi. statistical overview

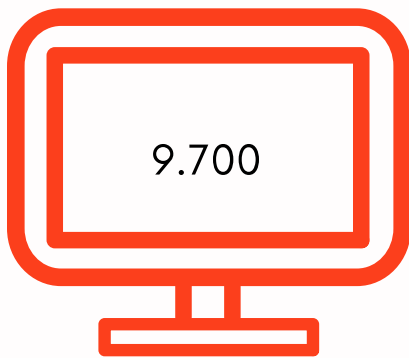


exhibit 5: total sample size

We screened major social media platforms and about 200 local bulletin board systems for posts that mention the names of the four suppliers. After cleaning data from double entries about 9.700 posts were stored in a database (exhibit 5).

We categorised users as authentic when their posts were connected to at least three authenticity markers or when their conversations were connected to authentic users' posts.

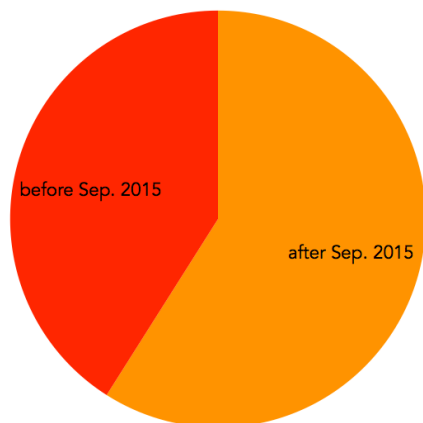


exhibit 6: posts before and after threshold

The detailed findings in section vii. refer only to posts dated September 2015 or later, i.e. the time period after Stockholm County Council found that "Atea and Dell both were able to demonstrate a systematic approach to deal with risk and non-compliance within their supply chain." [see annex 02]. 59% of the posts collected were dated September 2015 or later (exhibit 6).

In order to structure the information that workers posted on social media, we used tags. To this end, we first conducted simple word counts and identified frequently occurring words that relate to labour issues. In addition, we used a row of expert-generated key terms describing known social risks and rights violations. Each post was then related to these key terms. The key terms, in turn, were related to eleven topical issues that we derived from an expert review of the material. The topical issues identified are 1. recruitment related issues, 2. discrimination, 3. oppressive management, 4. wage-related grievances, 5. excessive overtime, 6. Ineffective grievance channels, 7. forced labour, 8. student worker/interns, 9. dorm related issues, 10. psychological stress, and 11. occupational health and safety.

Exhibit 7 depicts the share of posts that we reviewed under each topic. Note that post can be related to several issues, i.e. percentages do not sum up to 100.

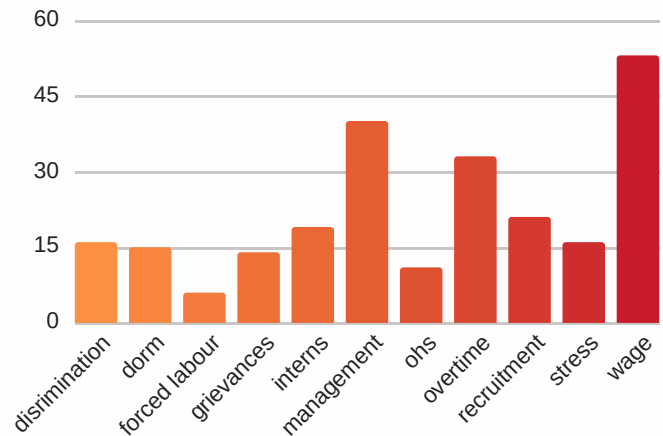


exhibit 7: share of posts reviewed under each topic

In exhibit 8 we present the absolute amount of tagged posts categorised into eleven topics. The visualisations bring to the fore that wages, overtime, and management issues dominate online discussions. Problems indicating that workers have to work against their will, and occupational health issues have the lowest number of mentions.

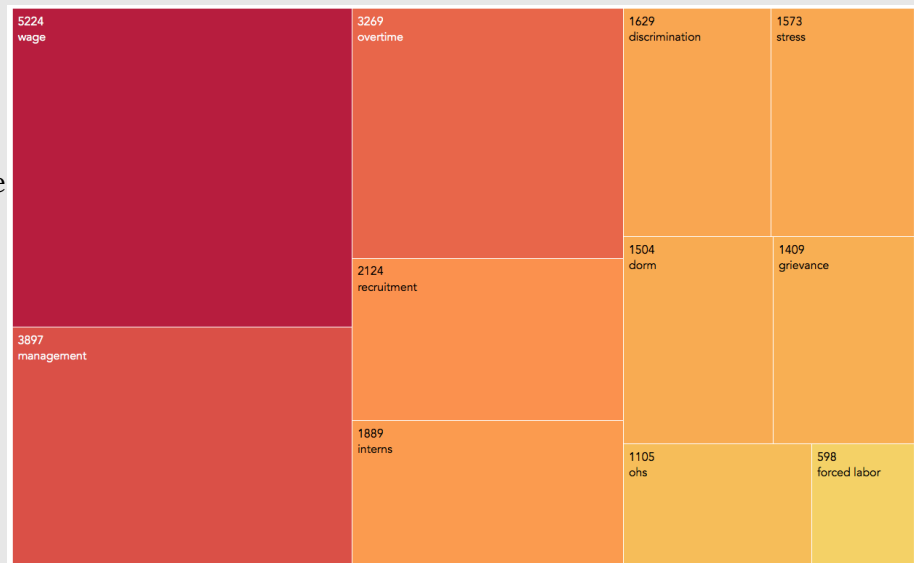
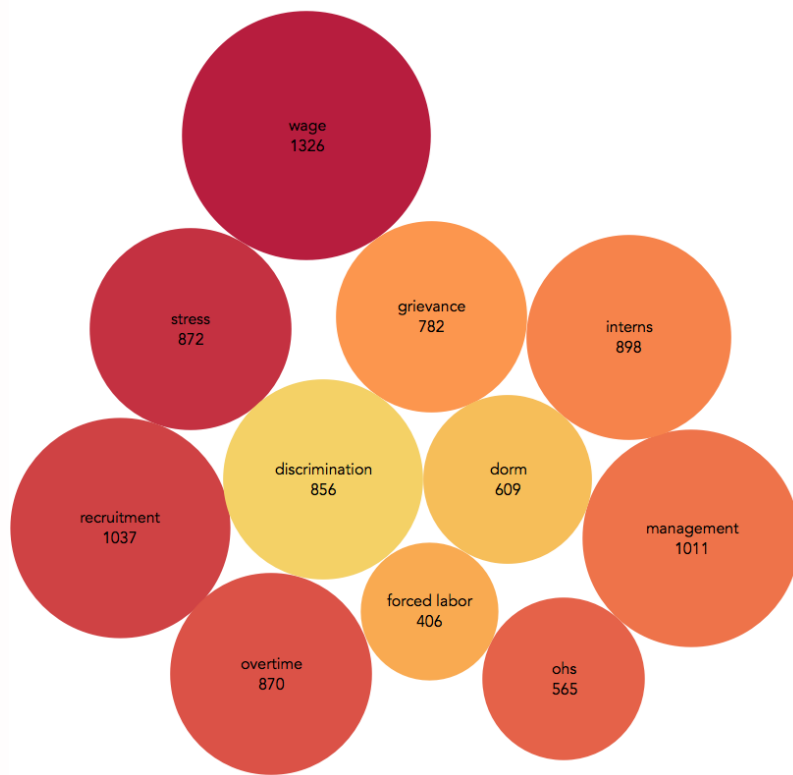


exhibit 8: absolut amount of taged posts under each topic (numbers) and relative size (squares)

Yet it cannot be concluded from these figures that forced labour is a minor problem because the sample is not representative. In

other words workers' searching and posting behaviour are not necessarily correlated with the pervasiveness of an issue.



We identify a total of 4287 users, i.e. on average each user posted twice. In exhibit 9 we detail the distribution of users by topic. The emerging pattern is quite similar to the post distribution. Still some of the less frequently named topics seem to attract a disproportionately large amount of users.

Exhibit 10 confirms this observation. Here we depict the number of posts per topic (x-axis) and number of users per topic (y-axis). The lines represent a logarithmic trend and related confidence bands. This visual suggests that "small topics" in terms of related post number regularly attract more post unique users.

exhibit 10: absolute amount of users by topic (numbers) and relative weight (circles)

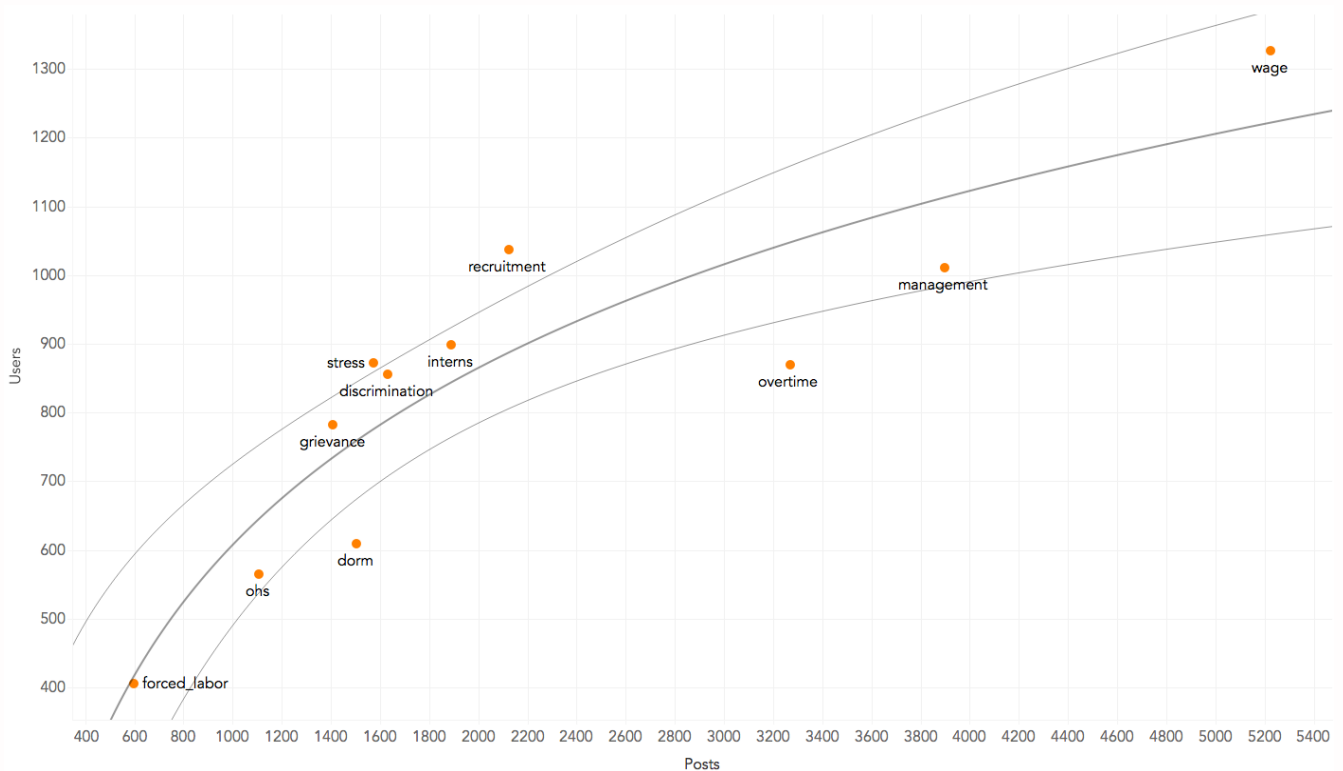


exhibit 10: scatter-plot of number of posts by topic (x-axis) vs. number of users by topic (y-axis)

vii. detailed findings

We present the collected material in eleven sections dealing with 1. recruitment related issues, 2. discrimination, 3. oppressive management, 4. wage-related grievances, 5. excessive overtime, 6. Ineffective grievance channels, 7. forced labour, 8. student worker/interns, 9. dorm related issues, 10. psychological stress, and 11. occupational health and safety. Presentation of the material is mainly based on direct citations. Background information is added in order to put posts and topics into a broader context. This study does not differentiate between the four suppliers or compare them because the analytical focus is Dell's management of social risks in its supply chain.

1. Recruitment related issues

Many suppliers make use of labour agencies when they recruit new workers. Since outsourcing of this service has become pervasive in the manufacturing industry [5], agents effectively have become part of the global supply chain. Consequently, agents' business practices need to be included in social risk analysis.

Recruitment agencies in China are unregulated and there is a lack of transparency. A rising number of "black agencies" that take advantage of the vulnerable groups in particular young inexperienced migrant workers from impoverished Central and Western Provinces who come to the large manufacturing sites at China's East Coast. A worker writes about her experience:

I came to Shenzhen almost ten days ago and lived in a hotel opposite of X corp. for two days. One day I met a representative from a dispatch firm at the main gate. He asked me for my CV and assured that this service was free of charge. We then got onto a car that brought us to a labour agency. I was hesitant to follow upstairs to the third floor when two men came down. They seemed to look for jobs as well. I asked them whether they had to pay in order to get an employment offer. They said that no money was needed. Upstairs I had to pay a registration fee of RMB 20. I thought RMB 20 isn't so much and thus paid it. After that, I had to pay a copy fee. I was led into a room for a job interview. I then was charged RMB 200. I was told that this money was for food at the factory.

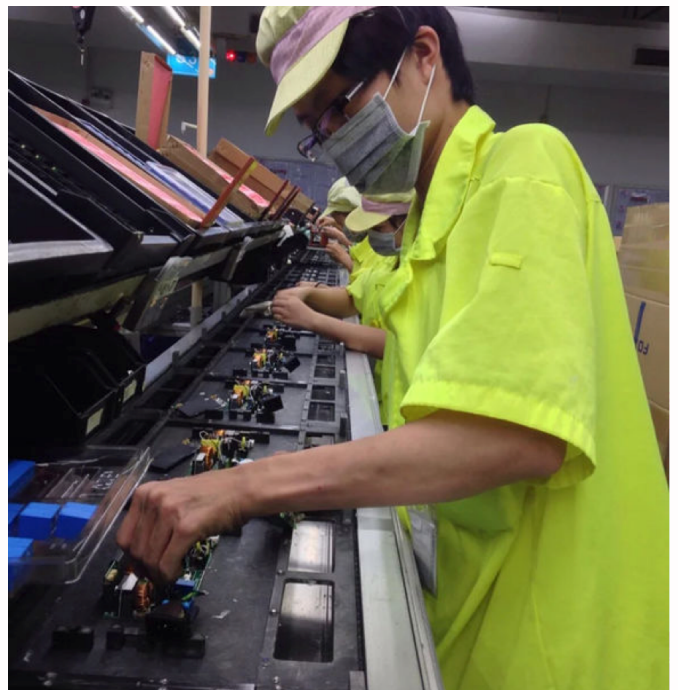


illustration: work at the factory sites. pictures posted by workers

In case I use less than 200 the rest will be added to my salary card at the end of the month. [...]

Another job seeker states:

I met an illegal agent who charged me RMB 50 for the physical examination. Then he said I had to pay additional RMB 200 for the uniform. I didn't believe him and started to quarrel and required my money back. The agent still kept my ID card and refused to return it. I picked up my mobile phone and pretended to ring somebody to check him. His colleague came over and tried to resolve the issue. He told the agent to return my money and ID card but I needed to sign a receipt. I arbitrarily scribbled some characters and left. [...]

Workers may fall victim to swindlers not only at the factory gates but also when they look for jobs online. Job applicants posting their CVs at one of the biggest job websites, 58tongcheng. The risks involved are considerable. For example, migrant workers may end up in a city or province far from their home paying money without getting a job. Once they left their homes they are forced to accept inferior work conditions or pay additional fees before entering a factory. Workers, therefore, reach out for help:

I would like to know whether your company cooperates with 58tongcheng fast track employment. I applied at 58 and got a call to come over.

I saw a WeChat add of an agency called Wulei Management. Does this firm really exist? New recruits are now getting a premium there.

Suppliers need to take responsibility both in terms of overseeing their agents' business practices as well as providing clear guidance to workers, online and offline, how to apply.

Could you please give me your corporations recruitment website address? I have been looking for it quite long but cannot find it. There are too many cheaters out there.

2. Discrimination

Shady agents target job seekers that are desperate due to discriminatory employment practices. Male workers and workers older than 40 years have a hard time to find a job and hence are likely to take a chance.

Today I was looking for work. I went from Xixiang to Shajing and then I walked further to Songgang and then back to Longhua. Not a single factory was looking for male workers. My legs are aching, my shoes are worn out, and I am forced to hang on. If only I was a women.

I am at Z. corp. Plant No. 1. It was very difficult to get a job. Men had to pay RMB 800 to an agent in order to get in. And still the odds were very low. We have been a group of more than 40 men. Only two got a job; I and a guy from Xianyang prefecture in Shaanxi Province could stay. I feel very lucky.

I would like to know whether a 45-year-old woman still could work at X corp. An agent asked for RMB 200. He said that the money would include the physical examination fee. He told me that he would ring somebody at the computer station at X.corp who then would call me in. I don't know whether this is true or not, whether I still can get in, sorry ...

3. Oppressive management

Once workers successfully enter a factory they are subjected to rules that aim at ensuring efficiency and discipline:

Newcomers should get familiar with the factory rules first, such as the workshop rules, discipline on the factory campus, and dormitories as well as the rules that apply to factory buildings. If you do not understand these rules you'll feel helpless when you get in conflict with them. For example, when you walk around on campus without your name badge visibly attached, the factory guards my approach you at any time asking you to sign that you neglected a rule. You won't get a wage deduction but it will reduce your points. Each worker has 12 points; when they are used up you'll be fired. Each factory has its own rules. The more you know about them the easier it will be for you to go along. If not your life will be full of constraints.

While rules to ensure discipline do not violate labour rights there is a risk that respective frameworks facilitate bullying and workplace oppression [6]. From this perspective discipline and the enforcement of harsh rules need to be regularly reviewed against the backdrop of occupational health and safety issues as well as discriminatory employment practices.

Workers report about verbal abuse, and physiological violence:

Some of the security staff and leaders do not show any sign of generosity. Sometimes small issues are turned into horrible deeds so that we almost look like criminals. We have no dignity here.

The treatment of workers at this factory is extremely bad. The security people have no respect for workers and the line leaders love to maltreat newcomers.

I am at Y, belt 15. I have been intern for one month. In a few days, I will leave. Now my group leader is yelling at me every day and arbitrarily looks for problems to blame me for. I start to wonder whether it is true that I am the problem.

This factory is the worst I have been working at, the food resembles pigs' food, and the work makes you tired like a dog. Your line leader stands at your side and constantly yells at you.

Workers often have to shoulder the costs of organisational failures and bottlenecks:

The food lines are very long, and we have to queue a long time at the entrances' security checks. We do not get a time allowance to get through security and afterwards additional 50 minutes are deducted for eating lunch. Each day we have to swipe our cards six times.

There are no regular shifts, and the team leaders don't care. First I worked daytime for one month, then I had to switch to night shift for 50 days, after that I worked again daytime for one week before I got back to the night shift.

4. Wage-related issues

Given the hardships, wages are the single most important issue. Generally, migrant workers are paid very low. The base salary for a factory worker equals the local minimum wage.

Work is exhausting and the salary low; only the minimum wage of RMB 1510.

We were a group of ten entering the factory together. We had only started with the training when many of us became very dissatisfied. We only get the minimum wage and there are no standard overtime fees. Most of the food is unpalatable and more expensive than outside the factory campus. I suppose that many of us will refuse to work tomorrow. I suggest if you can find another place don't come to this factory.

Minimum wages are below basic living expenses. For example, the gap between the Asia Floor Wage, a living wage estimate, and local minimum wages in China ranges between 50 and 75 percent [7]. As a result, workers often lack the means to satisfy basic needs:

A portion of bitter cucumber costs RMB 12, with my wage I cannot even afford a few dishes a day.

In this era of high technology, high-tech parks, high wages, and posh streets with big cars, I am at Z. Corp. silently praying to get three meals a day. I am getting more and more hungry and lose more and more weight.

Salary is low, 1510; below the cost for food. Other living expenditures are also high.

5. Excessive overtime

The Universal Declaration on Human rights of 1948 effectively stipulates living wages as a human right [8]. Looking at minimum wages will not do justice to this principle. The de-facto income of factory workers, however, is higher than the minimum wage due to over

time. Generally, it is quite difficult for a worker to predict how much she/he will earn each month.

The most important thing is the overtime. If you don't know how much overtime you'll work there is no way to determine your wage.

I earn 2650 the highest I got was 3800.

When you earn 3000 you are lucky, 2500 is normal, and 2000 still isn't considered to be too low.

Overtime is important for workers to make ends meet. This situation leads to a paradox where the legally stipulated 40 hours working week isn't a right but is turned into a potential punishment:

A woman who is working here tells all group-, and team leaders that I am underperforming so that other people get a bad impression of me. Now I do not have a regular work position any longer and I struggle through each and every day. Newcomers are all getting overtime work, while nobody is allocating overtime to me because nobody believes that I am hard working.

But even though workers need the extra work hours, the workload that they eventually have to perform is excessive:

The labour law states that a working week must not exceed 44 hours. We work each week 60 hours. Does this look legal to you?

Each month we work about 130 overtime hours. During one month we do the work of two.

It is really exhausting; I cannot stand it! At this factory, we work 12.5 hours! Tired!

Excessive overtime becomes quasi-compulsory due to the use of repression and punishment for those who oppose.

Everybody who is not coming to work overtime on Sundays is noted as absent without leave.

Our group leader usually uses the production bonus to threaten workers. Last month I worked 115 overtime hours and earned a wage of RMB 3300.

For Chinese migrant workers the ability to "eat bitterness" is a virtue because only those who can endure the monotonous work in a hostile environment will stay on for longer than a few months. High worker turnover in combination with cyclical recruitment campaigns are one of the reasons why workers need to work so many overtime hours:

I believe most of us work overtime until 10 or 12 o'clock sometimes even until 2.00 in the morning. [...] Most newly recruited workers enter during July and August. At that time many of the old workers have left already. But the new ones cannot replace them because they are not there yet or untrained. At that time one worker has to do the tasks of many.

It's a vicious cycle quitting – recruiting – quitting – each time the faces get younger and softer.

6. Ineffective grievance channels

When workers look for help internally they often do not know whom they should contact or they fail to receive support:

Friends, does anybody have the name of the trade union official who is responsible for our factory or a phone number of the human resources department?

The group leader forgot to report my overtime during the holidays. What should I do? I talked to him but he still didn't report it.

X. corp's salary hotline is (...), I called but the number doesn't exist. How do I get into contact with them?

What is the human resource department's hotline number? Is it different from the one on our card that we are supposed to ring when we have questions regarding our salary?

7. Forced labour

Electronics manufacturers, like many other export processing industries in China, have increasing difficulties in recruiting new workers due to demographic shifts. In response, the factory management makes it difficult for workers to quit:

The work at Y Corp. is still ok, but wages are low, and you easily get deductions. Since quitting affects their profits they do not let you go so fast, they hold you back.

The factories under investigation use various practices that violate workers' legal right to leave after 30 days prior notice:

I formally began at the workshop on the 27th and was placed at [exact location]. People told me that our group leader is vicious but I didn't believe them. From 28th on I was assigned to the transformer station. I had to insert four transformers and four batteries to each board. When the group leader taught me how to do it she couldn't manage herself. When I couldn't manage either she asked how it was possible that I am still so slow after one-day training. For several days I was not paid at all. It seems that you can quit after three months (you then can give prior notice one month and after an additional three months you can leave).

I paid an agent RMB 50 and went happily to Z Corp. At Z Corp. people told me that I had to stand all day. You have to accomplish six months before you are allowed to quit.

When workers want to quit they rely on the support of their direct superiors. Due to the labour shortage, quota requirements, and financial incentives group or line leaders have little interest in complying with legal requirements:

Yesterday evening I heard the group leader say that if the quitting quota at his line is below 4 percent a month he will get RMB 400 as a bonus. If all lines are below 4 percent he'll get RMB 700 in bonus. In case his line exceeds 4 percent he will face a deduction from his production quota bonus.

While some manufacturers define mandatory periods that violate workers' right to quit after 30 days other factories deploy queuing systems:

When I worked at X Corp. I was told that I had to queue when I want to quit. I went to the team leader but he didn't let me go. I thus went to the section leader who said that he had no authority to decide. I would have to talk to the factory manager. I went straight to the factory manager and said that I will leave in a few days. According to the labour law, I can leave after three days during the trial period. He said that the factory rule is that you have to line up.

I worked there before. You have to queue if you want to quit. Lining up effectively means that one is forced to leave on your own.

Workers discuss extensively the implications of "leaving on your own" as opposed to quitting. The former means that a worker resigns without the formal approval of the factory.

I am a regular worker at factory No. 5 leaving on my own. At the human resources department, they told me that I need to go to my manager and follow the procedures. I called the manager but he said that there is no procedure for leaving on your own. What should I do now?

When workers leave on their own they will lose money:

When you leave on your own do you get your salary?

Yes but they deduct RMB 200.

No, you don't get it.

I also didn't get my salary when I left on my own.

Last night a guy didn't show up at work and got ready to leave on his own. The group leader sent a text message to everybody stating that those who do not show up for work will not get their salary this month.

Dispatch workers don't get their wages when they leave on their own and they have no way of quitting.

Another problem with leaving on ones own relates to social insurance:

When I leave on my own and go to another factory with a different staff unit my social insurance still will continue at the old place so that I cannot pay social insurance at the new factory. Does that mean they don't take me? Is it that way?

Another worker reports that she already left on her own. Her social insurance, however, can only be handled after the 7th of the next month. This means that she has to stay on or travel back to the city in order to receive respective documentation.

Apparently, factories keep blacklists of unwanted workers; among them those who left on their own:

You better do not leave on your own because when you are on the list of those who left on their own they won't employ you later on when you apply for a post as technical staff or manager.

I have worked here for several years. But in the meantime I have left three times and haven't worked at a factory during the last two years. Do you think I still can get in or am I blacklisted?

I would like to know the procedure to get a name deleted from X corp's. blacklist.

The most effective and pervasive means forcing workers to obey to factory rules that violate legal rights is to withhold their so-called quitting confirmations, i.e. a brief statement when a worker was formally released. The statement is stamped by the factory's human resource department (see exhibit 5).

There is no legal requirement to issue or require such a document and thus it is up to the management when and under what circumstances to provide it. A worker, however, will have to show her/his quitting confirmation in order to get employment at another factory. Thus manufacturers collaborate with this document in order to weaken workers' negotiation power and force them to obey to internal rules that represent a violation of labour rights.

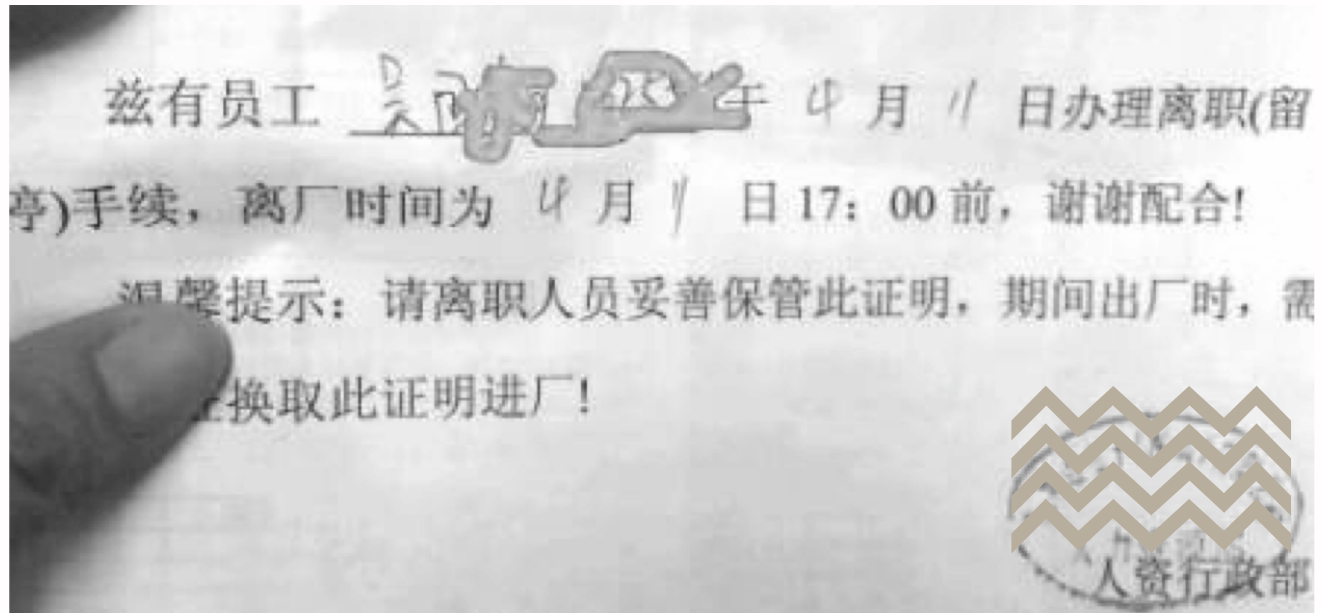


exhibit 5: quitting confirmation posted by worker

Welcome everybody to this factory with military style management. This place is full of our superiors' affection. Here we do not quit. We only leave on our own. This is because our boss wants to make sure that we won't get a job anywhere else.

You can make a quitting confirmation on your own. This way you avoid the risks that occur when you didn't quite at your former employer. It is not in order to prove that you actually have been working there.

While leaving on one's own is an informal process entailing a host of negative consequences, there is a lack of information on internal procedures for formal quitting:

I have a one-year contract and want to quit. In order to give 30 days prior notice should I go to our HR assistant and ask for a form? Or should I directly talk to the manager and ask him to provide me with the documents? Do I have to write a resignation letter?

8. Student workers/interns

In recent years employment of student workers caught much attention as another questionable practice to counter labour shortage and rising wages. Many Chinese students, in particular, those attending vocational schools are forced to work at assembly lines on irrelevant internships for 3-5 months. In 2015 DanWatch together with China Labour Watch reported about respective practices at Wistron in China [9]. Note that Wistron is a Dell supplier but not included in our sample.

The online voices that we collected suggest that interns are systematically used to replace regular workers at Dell's supplying factories.

The most despicable thing is that X corp. is particularly keen on recruiting interns. Their wages are very low, which they excuse the lack of work experience. They come here just to waste their time.

Students' posts bring to the fore worries of what to expect:

Our school's agent arranged that we work at this factory. Can we trust that we get a contract?

As undergraduates of a technical school will we do the same work as regular workers?

Brother, we interns who have not graduated how much can we earn at Z corp? Our school has placed us there.

There are even indications that some students do not get paid at all:

Our salary is directly charged to our teacher's card. What can we do? The teacher won't give us the money.

9. Dorm related issues

The majority of workers live in dorms located at the production sites. Living conditions at the dorms are difficult and for many hard to accept:

At the dorm, there is no warm water to shower. None of the dorms' toilets is ok. It is messy all over the place and the newcomers have no idea what they are supposed to do. The public bathroom is toxically dirty. Isn't there any way to get it into a somehow acceptable state? Many just don't use it at all. Will the water temperature be higher during wintertime?

Given the long working hours and the need to rest afterwards little time is spent outside the factory gates. Social ties with other workers,



illustration: pictures of dorms and food queues posted by workers

therefore, are important and become an immediate source of support when problems occur. Superiors and peers both can help to create a positive atmosphere:

Our group leader is a gentle and quiet woman from Henan. Each time when there is a meeting the other group leaders are lecturing us, but not so our group leader. She often says that a production line is a team, everybody is important.

Everybody says that people from Henan are not good. At our line, 90 percent of the workers are from Henan and they are particularly nice. I am very lucky to have met such wonderful people.

Social relations and friendship, on the one hand, provide workers with mental strength and practical help. On the other hand, however, solidarity can impose a concern to the factory management, when workers collectively oppose working or living conditions. Therefore, in order to prevent the formation of tight social networks, workers are routinely shifted between dorms:

There is a rule that you have to move to another dorm after a certain time. If you refuse they will change the lock, or they will force you to quit. They might also use some other problem at the dorm as an excuse. They even drag you out of the dorm and if you still not give in they just take your suitcase and put it outside the factory gate.

10. Psychological stress

Despite the fact that electronics manufacturing sites host tens of thousands of workers many of them feel isolated and alone:

I have been here for half a year and always work alone. The other newcomers all have somebody while I'll do all the stuff myself. Our newly arrived leader is turning his back on me and the manager probably wants to get rid of me. But on this floor, I can be on my own. Sometimes I just cannot bear it any longer and think of leaving. But then again I am not going to leave like this.

Another unpleasant Friday; luckily I don't have to work overtime today. Inside I feel so anxious.

A few years ago the media reported about a series of suicides at Foxconn, Apples largest supplier. Suicide notes named stress, long workdays and harsh managers or unfair fines as well as unkept promises of benefits [10]. At Chinese factories, workers suffering from depression rarely dare to reach out for help. Thus it is important when suicides occur to ask why the suffering of a person went unnoticed or if it was noticed why there was no help.

In 2016 a young woman jumped from the roof of a building at one of Dell's supplying factories. A picture of the scene was posted on social media and a worker wrote:

She jumped in the morning at 5.00 o'clock. After she jumped she still was alive, laying there screaming. Somebody who heard her called the security people. Several of them came at 6.00 o'clock but there was no ambulance. After she had been laying there for a while she died. Seeing somebody dying like this makes your heart freeze.

In 2017 a post stated: "I heard that today again somebody jumped from the roof"

11. Occupational health and safety

Work at the factory is tiring, which enhances the risk of accidents.

Being tired is what all workers at Y Corp. have in common.

Workers have to stand all day and they are not allowed to walk. Prolonged and frequent standing, without some relief by walking can result in painful inflammation of the veins. In addition, it causes the joints in the spine, hips, knees and feet to become temporarily immobilised or locked, which can later lead to rheumatic diseases [11].

It is a principle there that you have to stand at work.

At work, it is not allowed to walk or talk. Not being allowed to talk means that you easily doze off. It's impossible to reach the prescribed production quotas when fighting with tiredness.

The work pace is very fast so that there is no time to drink or go to the toilet. Particularly during the warm seasons, this may lead to dehydration, which reduces a person's reaction time and ability to concentrate. This, in turn, increases the risk for accidents [7].

At the belt, everybody is tired down to the bones. Every day they yell at you, every day there are quality and quantity demands, every day you have to accomplish the prescribed amount; 1300 pieces today, then 1500 tomorrow. You are so busy that there is no time to drink, and no time to go to the toilet. It is also very difficult to find somebody taking your place when you need to go to the toilet. Because it is so difficult some people just drag you.

This isn't a fortunate day. I almost cannot get up. In the morning my whole body was aching and after work, the pain still was there. The last two days it was so hot. I don't want it any longer; I don't want it any longer. God, I don't want to open my eyes.



"Being tired is what all workers at Y corp. have in common."

viii. conclusion

In this study we present a new tool to conduct a social due diligence analysis that is not dependent on supplier information, and does not involve the risk of retaliation associated with worker interviews onsite or offsite. The sole source of information is grievances that workers posted on Chinese social media. Globalworks Lund AB developed a prototype that searches for relevant information on the Internet, and structures the retrieved data with the help of machine learning algorithms and expert validation.

Workers' voices report about a number of grievances that violate legal rights as well as SLL's and Dell's codes of conduct. Some of the rights violations that we found were already exposed in the 2013 DanWatch report while others are new. Workers are still:

- forced to work more than the legally allowed overtime
- exposed to harsh rules and verbal abuse
- subject to discriminatory recruitment practices
- unaware of their legal rights and representation

Additionally, workers are:

- systematically prevented from quitting for up to six months
- caught in an internship exploitation scheme and have no choice but to work in Dell's supplier factories as regular workers
- earning below living wages and that base wages are insufficient to afford food
- subjected to unhealthy and unsanitary living conditions at the dorms
- suffering from psychological stress.

On a general note, our findings confirm that labour rights violations are endemic to global supply chains. The practices deployed to undermine legal rights and codes of conduct are constantly in flux. Experience of the last two decades demonstrates that the auditing industry's use of correction action plans (CAPs) is an ineffective tool to tackle the endemic and fluid nature of malpractices. Social media based grievance monitoring can open new opportunities for better labour rights protection

endnotes

[1] article available at <http://speri.dept.shef.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Global-Brief-1-Ethical-Audits-and-the-Supply-Chains-of-Global-Corporations.pdf>

[2] report available at <https://www.danwatch.dk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/IT-workers-still-pay-the-price.pdf>

[3] report available at http://electronicswatch.org/en/public-procurement-human-rights-due-diligence-a-case-study-of-the-swedish-county-councils-and-the-dell-computer-corporation-february-2016_2456642.pdf

[4] information about the award can be found at <http://www.sll.se/nyheter-stockholms-lans-landsting/2017/05/Landstinget-prisas-for-arbete-med-manskliga-rattigheter/>

[5] information about the pervasiveness of recruitment agents was reported in presentations and discussions at the "made in China summer school" in Venice, June 2017 (<https://www.chinoiresie.info/summer-school/>)

[6] a research overview on occupational violence can be found at http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_535656.pdf

[7] information on average wages in China and Asia floor wage estimates were retrieved from <http://www.ausbil.com.au/research-insights/research/is-the-fast-fashion-industry-at-an-inflection-point>

[8] the universal declaration on human rights can be found at <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

[9] information on the Wistron investigation can be found at <https://business-humanrights.org/en/china-danwatch-investigations-found-forced-interns-at-wistron-manufacturer-of-hp-dell-lenovo-servers-companies-respond>

[10] information on the Foxconn suicides can be found at <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/jun/18/foxconn-life-death-forbidden-city-longhua-suicide-apple-iphone-brian-merchant-one-device-extract>

[11] OHS information on the consequences of prolonged standing can be found at https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/ergonomics/standing/standing_basic.html

12 EXPRESSEN

TISDAG 19 MAJ 2015

LANDSTING KÖPER IN DATORER FRÅN SKANDALFABRIKEN

SVÅRA MISSFÖRHÅLLANDEN PÅ DELLIS FABRIKER I KINA

■ Citat från den danska organisationen Danwatch rapport:

ÖRYETER MOT MÄNSKLIGA RÄTTIGHETER

■ Svåra arbetsförhållanden och brott mot en rad mänskliga lagar och internationella konventioner samt brott mot mänskliga rättigheter påträffades.

HÅRD ÖVERVAKNING AV ARBETARNA

■ Arbetsledare som övervakar arbetet och arbetstempot skriker och grålar på arbetare som är för långsamma. Om arbetarna vill ändra ställning måste de fråga arbetsledaren om lov.

OBLIGATORISK ÖVERTID I HÖGSÄSON

■ För de flesta arbetare är övertid inte ett frivilligt val utan ett krav. Högsäsongen innebär en obligatorisk övertid på 33,5 timmar i veckan utöver de vanliga 40 timmarna. De arbetar då alla dagar i veckan.

55 ARBETARE DELAR PÅ EN TOILETT

■ Mellan åtta och tio arbetare delar på varje rum, i väringsdelar. 55 arbetare måste dela på en toalett.

ARBETARE KAN VÄGRAS ATT SLUTA

■ Gruppchefen måste godkänna avslutningsanledningar. Det har varit tillfällen när han helt enkelt inte vill att arbetare ska sluta.

Källa: Kalla Fakta



Arbetarna har åtta-tio personer i varje rum. 55 arbetare delar på en toalett. Foto: TH4



Dell har avtal med ett antal landsting. Foto: TH4



Thomas Wedegren är upphandlingschef i Stockholms landsting. "I en upphandlingssituation så kan inte vi styra över vilka underleverantörer våra leverantörer anlitar", säger han i "Kalla fakta". Foto: TH4

HÅRD KRIK. Arbetare kör vid en av datatillverkningsfabrikerna i Kina. Under högsäsong tvingas de arbeta 73,5 timmar i veckan – det är bara en av punkterna som kritiseras i den danska organisationen Danwatch rapport. Foto: TH4

"Kalla fakta" avslöjar: Känner till missförhållanden – affärerna fortsätter

Landstingens upphandlare varnades om allvarliga missförhållanden på Dellis kinesiska fabriker.

Trots det kan TV4:s Kalla Fakta i kväll avslöja att det tecknats mångmiljonavtal med datortillverkaren – eftersom de var billigast.

– Man har gått ut väldigt publikt och offentligt med sina regler och så följer man det inte, det är klart att det inte är bra, säger Tomas Brytting, professor i organisationsetik, i programmet.

Kalla Faktas reporter

Camilla Ziedorn har träffat Liu som arbetar med att montera datorer på en fabrik i den kinesiska staden Shenzhen.

Han börjar klockan sju på kvällen och jobbar till sju på morgonen. I totalt tio timmar står han upp och kontrollerar datordelar vid löpande bandet, minst sex nätter i veckan.

– Om vi inte jobbar övertid varje dag och inte jobbar extra på helgerna är det knappt så att

21.00

pengarna räcker, säger han i programmet.

Varje år köper de svenska landstingen in varor till bland annat sjukhus och vårdcentraler för 120 miljarder kronor. De är mäktiga aktörer på marknaden och har stort utrymme att avbryta kontrakt om företag inte håller sig till de etiska kraven.

Kalla Fakta kan nu avslöja att flera landsting medvetet brutit mot de etiska värderingarna vid upphandlingar. Trots upprepade

varningar om missförhållanden på datortillverkaren Dellis kinesiska fabriker valde landstingen att köpa in deras datorer.

Avtal med landsting

I januari 2014 mejlar en handläggare på inköpsavdelningen i Västra Götalandsregionen experter på landstingen runt om i Sverige. Han har just läst en rapport från den danska organisationen Danwatch om mycket grova missförhållanden i datortillverkaren Dellis fabriker i Kina. När rapporten kommer har över hälften av Sveriges 21 landsting avtal om att köpa in just Dell-datorer.

I juni samma år har landstingen ett möte med Dell. Enligt Kalla Fakta medger Dell då att



Tomas Brytting kritiserar landstingens.

holm, ett nytt avtal om att under tre år köpa in 45 000 datorer till ett värde av 156 miljoner kronor.

"Kan inte vara tydligare"

Kalla Faktas reporter Camilla Ziedorn frågar honom varför de valde att köpa in Dell-datorer när de visste hur det såg ut i deras leverantörsled.

– ...I en upphandlingssituation så kan inte vi styra över vilka

underleverantörer våra leverantörer anlitar.

Men ni visade att de inte levde upp till sina villkor.

– I en upphandlingssituation kan vi inte göra så.

På vad sätt, du måste förklara för mig.

– Jag kan inte vara tydligare för så ser det ut. Så ser upphandlingssituationen ut.

Var 16 miljoner billigare

Thomas Wedegren upprepar det sista svaret flera gånger. Han kan inte förklara valet av Dell.

Men enligt Kalla Fakta fanns det en faktor som vägde tyngre än socialt ansvarstagande. Dellis återförsäljare Asa var 16 miljoner kronor billigare än de konkurrerande alternativen.

Fredrik Lennander
fredrik.lennander@expressen.se

UPPHANDLING24

Dell kvar som leverantör

» EFTER RAPPORTER OM missförhållanden på fabriker i Kina inledde Stockholms läns landsting i februari i år en revision av Atea och persondatorunderleverantören Dell. I maj kom krav på att ramavtalsleverantören Atea skulle välja andra produkter än Dells.

När revisionen nu är genomförd släpps det kravet. Thomas Wedegren, upphandlingschef vid SLL, förklarar varför:

– Vi har i uppföljningen noterat en klart förbättrad transparens kring arbetet med socialt

ansvarstagande hos framför allt Dell.

Sammantaget bedömer landstinget att både Atea och Dell kan uppvisa ett systematiskt arbete med risk- och avvikelsehantering i leverantörsledet.

– Genom att ställa krav på leverantörer påverkar vi dem att stärka sitt eget uppföljningsarbete. Det är det här vi vill åstadkomma med vår strategi kring socialt ansvarstagande.

PER ERIKSON

På sid 20 står det mer om detta.

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PRESS RELEASE: DELL REMAINS AS A SUPPLIER

