

Is the Helper always happy?

– platform based domestic cleaning in Denmark

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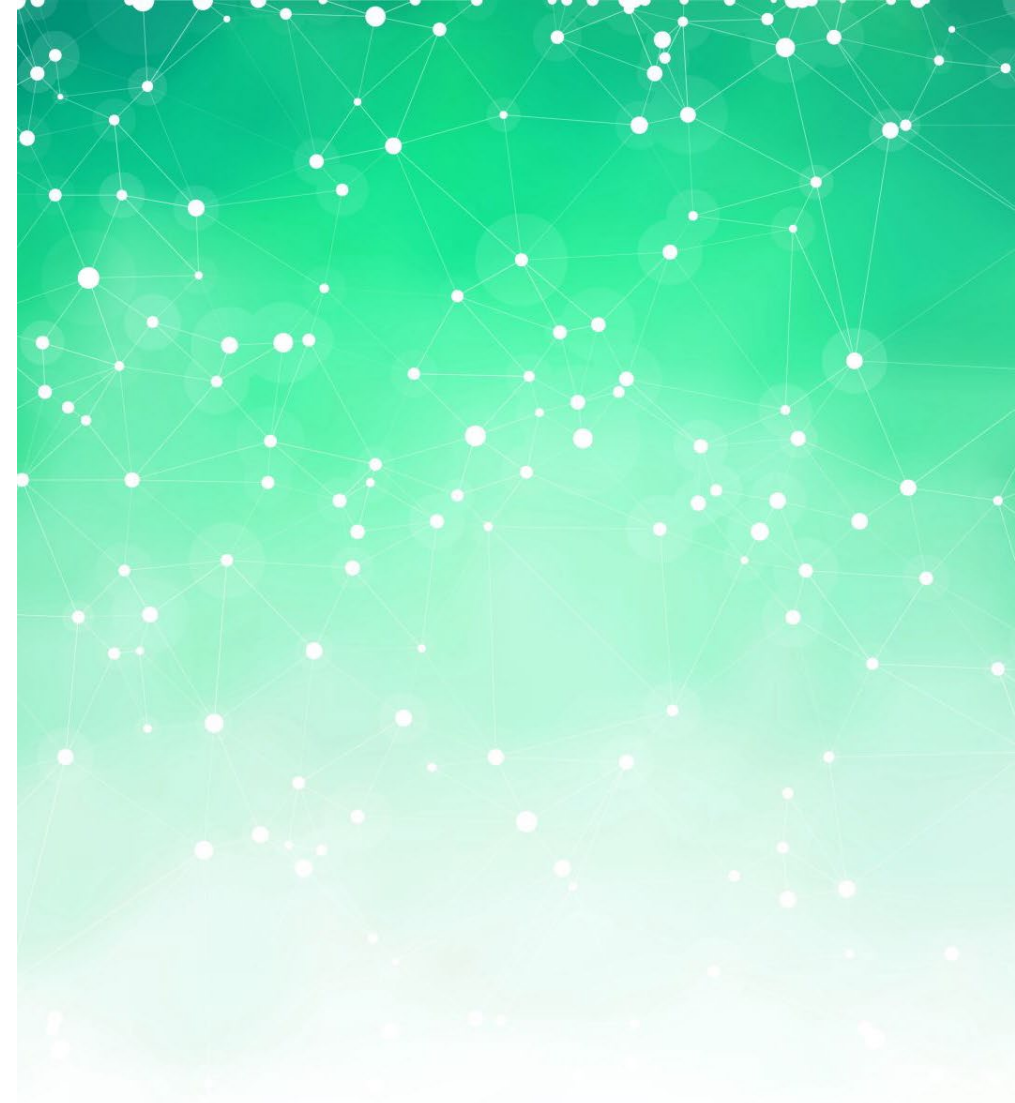
Choice of industries

- Male vs female dominated
- Visibility vs invisibility



Agenda

- Context: the cleaning industry in DK
- The case: Happy Helper
- Results: Occupational health and safety risks in platform-based domestic cleaning
 - Research question: How do platform companies within domestic cleaning algorithmically manage workers, and in what ways does this influence the occupational health and safety of the workers?
 - A qualitative case study
- Conclusion and recommendations



Context: cleaning in Denmark

- Regular employment at an employer
- Outsourcing
- Many small local cleaning companies as well as large companies
- Relatively easy to establish a cleaning business
- Often lack of labour supply
- Informal and undeclared work

- Low or little formal education
- Women + non danish background overrepresented
- Labour market entrance for foreigners
- Part time employment widespread



Emergence of platform companies

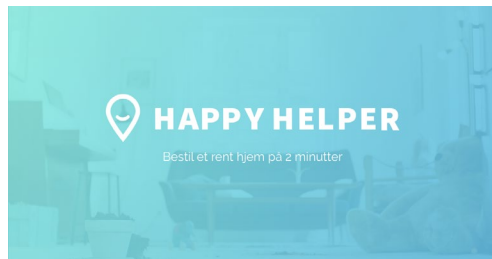


Freelance model (most often)



Online platforms that connect cleaners with costumers based on an automated match

Review based



Argue that they provide cleaners with costumers

Argue that they provide safety for both the cleaner and the costumer (insurance, support, payment)

About Happy Helper

- The largest cleaning platform in DK
- Domestic cleaning, office cleaning, move out cleaning
- 4500 'helpers', mostly foreigners
- Operates in the largest cities in Denmark
- Founded in 2015 (inspired by Uber's business model, attempt to formalize informal work)
- Freelance model
- Struggled economically during COVID 19
- Went bankrupt in 2024, bought by HandyHand



How to book cleaning

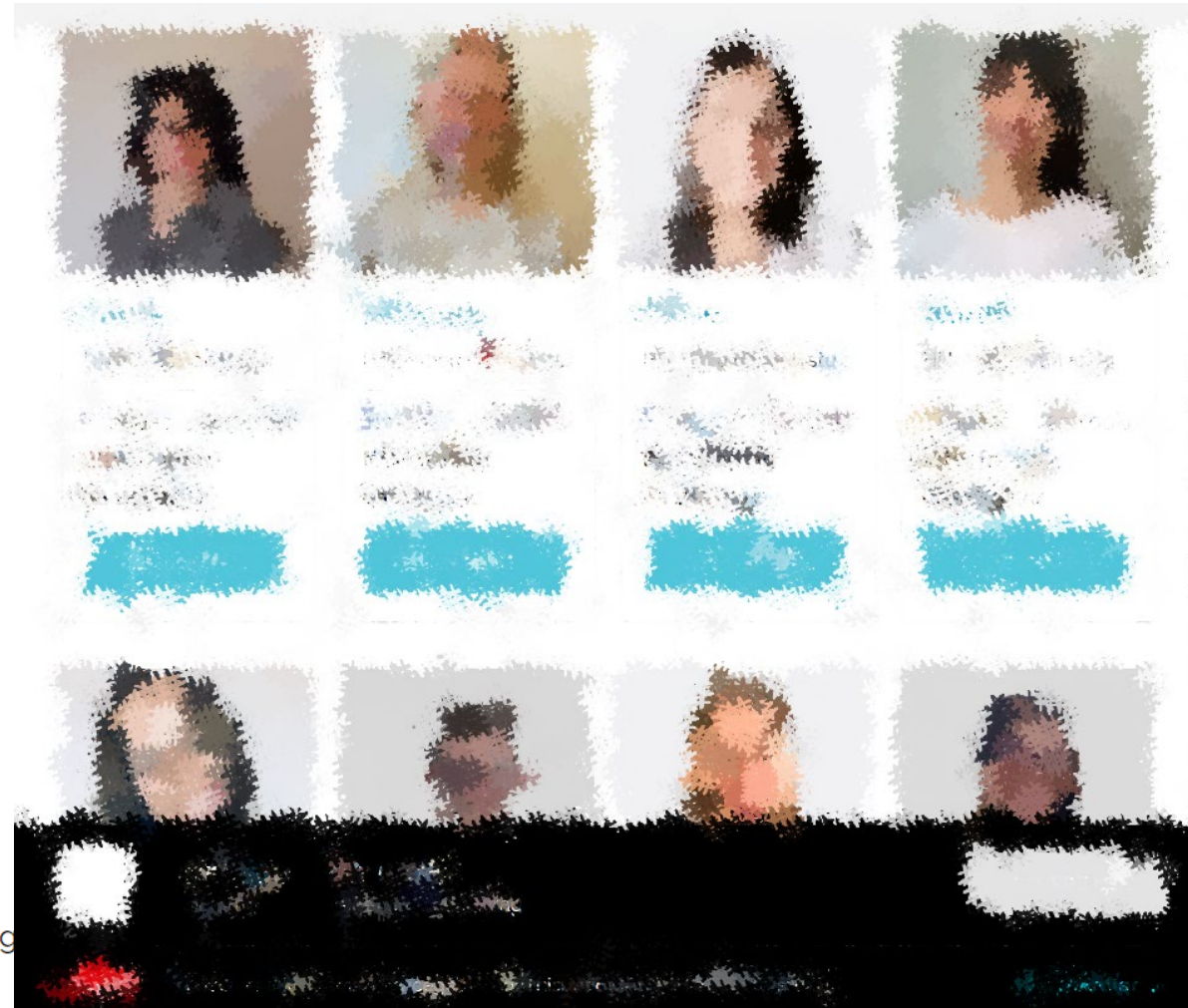


♥♥♥♥♥ 19. juni 2021

Christian: Sød pige som kommer til tiden men hun har ridset vores gulve i det meste af lejligheden med støvsugeren og flere overflader rundt omkring er heller ikke gjort rent hun gjorde et ihærdigt forsøg det var bare ikke godt nok og vi kan derfor ikke give hende flere hjerter desværre.

♥♥♥♥♥ 20. juni 2021

Anita: [redacted] er sød, punktlig og grundig. Vil helt klart anbefale hende til andre



Vælg blandt **15 helpers** der er klar til at gå igang hos dig



New helper



Standard helper



Premium helper



Pro helper

FIND DIN NÆSTE RENGØRER

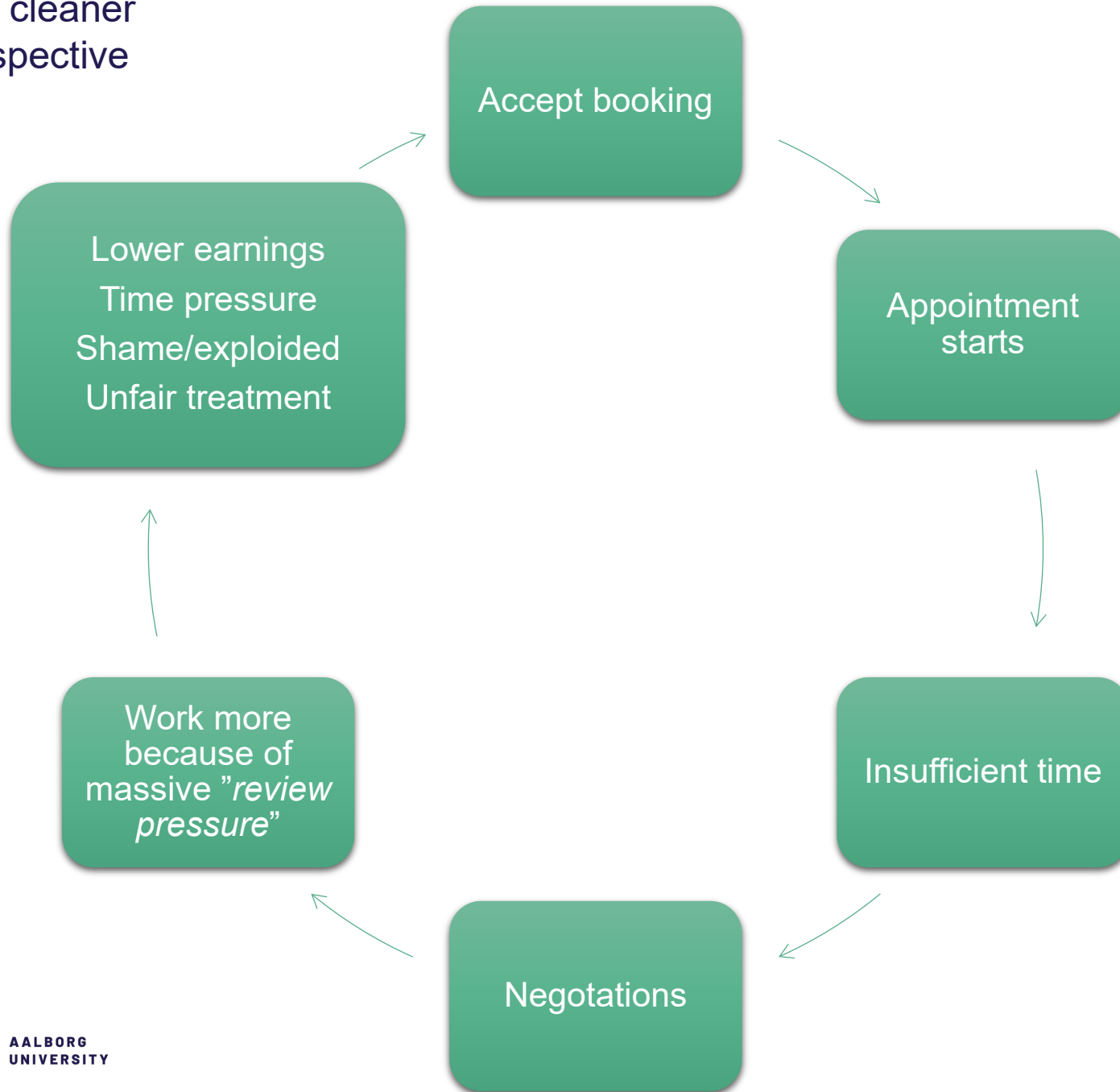
Kom rent
mere tid og
i hverdagen

Book en Happy Helper

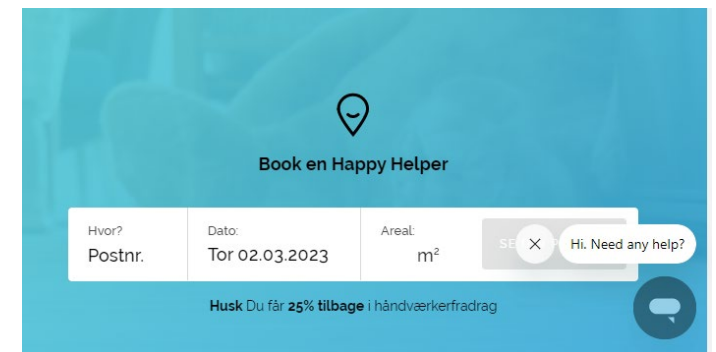
Hvor? Postnr. Dato: Tor 02.03.2023 Areal: m² Hi. Need any help?

Husk Du får 25% tilbage i håndværkerfradrag

The cleaner perspective



“I would just end up talking to the person face to face, and they are like “oh but it is not so dirty. We keep it tidy”, and I think well, you have splattered and greased kitchen walls, but I can’t say these things right in your face, right? After a while trying to communicate with these people, I thought it was a waste of time, because it was very rarely I could make them see the light’ (female cleaner).



Physical work environment

- Physically demanding
- The customer must provide the helper with cleaning supplies and equipment
- But lack of proper cleaning supplies and equipment worsens the physical work environment (e.g. broken vacuumer)
- Physical pain
- Can't work the same amount of hours



Consequences of performing work alone

- ▶ Loneliness
- ▶ Concern about working alone in private homes
- ▶ A generalized feeling of being invisible: *“You are invisible not only for the client, but also for society. I am in this unregulated grey area. It has also eroded my self-esteem, like mentally it is awful”* (female cleaner)



Conclusion

OHS risks are present within platform based domestic cleaning

- Stress/working under time pressure
- Feeling inferior and exploited
- Lower/unpredictable earnings
- Physical demanding
- Isolation

Some resembles OHS risk in traditional cleaning, but others are caused by or enhanced because of the digitalized work arrangement

What can be done to improve OHS and working conditions:

- Approach platform companies about how to improve OHS
- Create possibilities for platform workers to engage in a collegial community (food couriers are a bit more ahead here, also a bit more on the political agenda)

