

## **EXPANDED ABSTRACT**

### **Improving social well-being through platform cooperativism**

Currently, collaborative economy is an emerging concept which is open to debate, including different meanings depending on the model to provide services, the kind of participant or the use of shared information and communication platforms. However, a distinguishing feature of the collaborative economy is the use of new technologies by the various agents concerned in order to get a common goal such as in the financial sector or in the education sector.

This new approach can be transferred to already consolidated organizations, which are noted for pursuing a social interest against the interest of the capital. These organizations seek social benefit and not the economic benefit, seeking a positive social impact that can change society.

It is precisely the digital component and the use of the technologies of information the aspect that distinguishes these emerging activities that are developing in recent years. Besides, they are changing purchasing behaviour and ways of doing business. These changes are having significant impacts in economic and employment terms, conflicts with traditional companies that are disadvantaged, or breaches of tax duties. But, at the same time, it also encourages many actions of collective interest, to the extent that digital platforms can be an effective tool to track achievement of the multitude of actions in favour of the community.

The aim of this paper is to analyse how platform cooperativism could be a suitable way to carry out the improvement of social welfare in vulnerable districts. In order to enhance the renovation and improvement of neighbourhoods it is necessary an active participation by citizens and public administrations. In fact, a key element to obtain an increase of the quality of life is the implication of residents, who often propose the changes and renovation in their districts, with significant deficiencies of habitability and power consumption, accessibility problems and lack of services. There is a need to recover the consolidated city through urban rehabilitation and urban renovation.

The urban renewal has a strong impact on Europe's economy and also on its citizens' quality of life because promote their social welfare. The Spanish urban planning tradition has been based mainly on the production of new city, disregarding the regeneration of consolidated city. Nowadays, Spanish government is concerned about an environment with derelict areas and substandard housing, and a largely obsolete housing stock. Therefore, current urban regulation encourages the urban renewal, the restructuring of building industry and the compliance with European legal

requirements regarding sustainable development. In Spain, there are around 6 millions of houses that were built over 50 years ago. Therefore, it is especially necessary and suitable the option of promoting urban renewal and regeneration at different levels.

Urban renewal projects are fairly complex to make because many actors are involved in these processes and as well as the activities that should be carried out. Therefore, the use of the new technologies can attract many people to actively participate in the urban regeneration projects design. These projects will improve the quality of life and welfare of citizens who live in deprived neighbourhoods.

In this context, we carry out a theoretical revision of platform cooperativism, as well as the urban development regulation focused on urban rehabilitation, studying the economic players involved in the urban regeneration projects such us: owners individually or associated in community of house owners, building corporations, co-operatives, and public administration, in order to analyse the role played by each of them in the platform cooperativism.

The community of house owners play a leading role in the processes of urban rehabilitation, they are principal actors because these processes have a direct effect on their lives; not only from an economic point of view (costs that must be paid by individual citizens) and from a social point of view (improvements in the building made directly affects their quality of life). In this respect, a digital platform could be very useful in order to serve as link between all owners or all those affected by the processes and should provide information about the identified problems that need to be solved by urban rehabilitation.

One of the key elements in urban renewal is the implication of the residents, who take part in the changes and improvements of their district. The cooperative initiatives produce cohesive urban neighbourhoods and they are associated with participatory planning approaches and collective action. The cooperative society contributes to social cohesion; therefore this could be the economic organization more suitable in order to develop the urban renewal.

The urban rehabilitation cooperative and the use of digital technologies helps to improve the level of quality of life and social well-being for citizens under the principles of democratic participation of all residents, providing more transparency into the process and the published information, allowing members of the cooperative the supervision of the information deposited in the network.

In this business model the cooperative takes control of urban rehabilitation in a digital environment, resulting in a benefit to all members involved not only for the cooperative, establishing a commitment to access to different scenarios where conflicts of interest are likely to arise. This platform focuses on creating discussion for successful decision making.

The construction companies and the public administration are also an essential part of the cooperative platform. They are the services suppliers, providing valuable information that must be communicated on the platform, allowing it to make effective decisions for residents for the duration of urban regeneration-development works.

The platform cooperativism in the processes of urban rehabilitation would benefit all members and not just few as in the "commercial" digital economy. Thus, the main conclusion of the paper is that the cooperative platform should facilitate public participation of the different actors involved in the urban regeneration such as: cooperatives, residents or public administration. This platform should speed up the decision-making process in a democratic and transparent environment, pursuing a common goal to improve the welfare of the citizens through the urban rehabilitation. Thus, cooperative platforms involve a technological, cultural, social and political changing that we have to explore, taking into account the physical condition of many buildings in Spain. Platform cooperativism could be the link between cooperative values and digital revolution, aimed at improving the social welfare.

**KEYWORDS:** Sharing economy, platform cooperativism, cooperative platform, urban rehabilitation, users of digital platform.