

Unlocking data value for platform labour

Insights from worker-led, SSE platform models

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Platform cooperativism: the quest for a new cooperative form suited to the new modes of production of the digital age

A new generation of businesses are emerging online, and we are concerned that the extraordinary potential for co-operative models rooted in participation and equality is not being realised because of a narrow focus in these markets on investor-led models of business. We applaud pioneers of democratic business in digital markets, including emerging models of platform cooperatives operating in line with core international values and principles. We encourage and welcome efforts by co-operatives actively to support the risk-taking of this new generation of co-operative entrepreneurs, through information sharing, promotion and appropriate finance and business partnerships

- Resolution of the General Assembly of the ICA, 2017

IT for Change's research study supported by the ILO

Platform Labour in Search of Value

Desk review, 50+ stakeholder interviews

Insights about new SSE models in the platform economy context

Finding 1

**Platform cooperativism the SSE
alternative to the dominant platform
model.**

Platform Cooperativism as SSE alternative



- Progressive movement which originated in the global North in 2015, as an antidote to the “sharing economy”
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- Platform cooperatives from the EU and US have carved a niche as hyperlocal business models catering to a small consumer base invested in sustainable consumption (eg. Food Fairies in Berlin, an initiative led by former Deliveroo riders)

Platform Cooperativism as SSE alternative



Venture capital funding, IP regimes underpinning mainstream platforms are unsuitable for cooperatives

Lack of options with respect to digital infrastructure

Platform Cooperativism as SSE alternative

The corporate cloud, really, is just someone else's computer; it is at odds with platform cooperative ethics. However, to deliver the AI-powered features that near-future users will demand, applications will need to draw upon sophisticated industrial-strength AI software services and harness powerful clusters of data-mining server farms.

This stuff doesn't come cheap. Free, open, and radically decentralised AI isn't a thing yet, but blockchain-based platforms like Ethereum and Backfeed could offer decentralised alternatives to the corporate cloud [...] In its infancy, Ethereum is far more expensive than the Amazon cloud but with laughable performance and capability by comparison.

David Carroll

Finding 2

Dedicated start-up accelerators are expanding the global footprint of platform cooperatives.

Dedicated startup accelerators



Partner in the Fledge
accelerator network  Fledge

Socially conscious
investment funds



>>> UnFound.coop

Traditional cooperatives

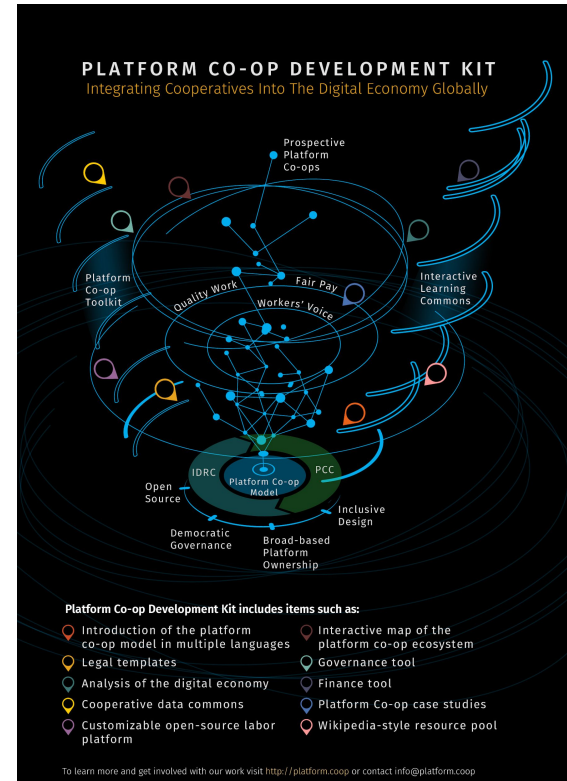


Social service organisations

Dedicated startup accelerators

Platform Development Toolkit:

- (a) Setting up a comprehensive “living map” of platform cooperatives and support system organisations across the world that can catalyse peer learning and collaborative action
- (b) Forging an international network of lawyers with support from Harvard Law School to ensure that platform cooperatives in any corner of the world can access strategic legal guidance
- (c) Developing a customisable open source labour platform that can be adapted by different platform cooperatives with the support of the Inclusive Design Research Centre.



In [our techno-design], the owners of the platform cooperative are the workers, and in certain cases (e.g., in care cooperatives), both workers and the clients/customers. They decide, and make transparent, what data is collected, how it is used and whether it is shared with any other entity, for what purpose, under what conditions. We have come up with a portable, personal data [sharing] preference standard. This will support a two-way negotiation. The personal data producer will be able to discover and explore the risks and benefits of releasing their data, and then declare who they trust with their data, for what purposes and under what conditions. The service provider that wishes to use the data will declare, in an auditable and transparent way, what data is essential for delivering the service. The intention is to prevent data over-reach and enable individuals to control how their data is used. We do not want to instrument[al]ise work surveillance, or create systems that pit workers against each other.

We also do not want to support predatory sales tactics.”

- Jutta Treviranus, Inclusive Design Research Centre

Dedicated startup accelerators



- SEWA platform cooperative for 250 domestic workers (Homecare and Soundarya coops)
- Hyper-local, web-based concierge service
- Rejection of automated scoring and ranking of workers

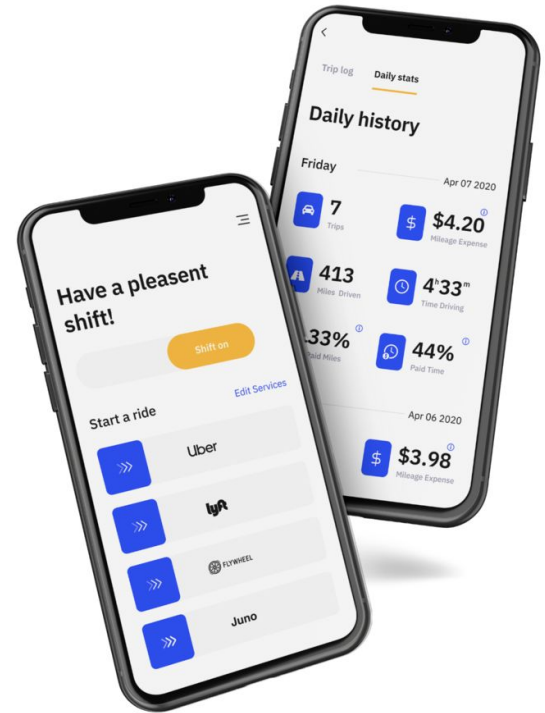
Platform cooperativism design workshop

Finding 3

Data cooperatives the latest offshoot of the platform cooperativism idea.

Data cooperatives

- Trade unions and worker cooperatives in the Global North have put forward models in the ride-hailing sector for the creation of a worker-owned data commons
- Some initiatives propose creation of a data pool by members as a strategy for collective bargaining with platform employers (MIT-UNI Global)
- Others seek to generate data dividends by monetising such data (Drivers' Seat)



Finding 4

In the South, SSE organisations are setting up e-commerce marketplaces.



Angkasa, Malaysia



China E-Coop

Replication of the data strategies of the mainstream platform model

Go-Coop cross-posts its products on mainstream e-commerce platforms such as Myntra and Amazon, evaluating on a case-by-case approach the trade-off between accessing the wider market reach of these platforms and their steep commission rates and one-sided terms of service



Negotiation with the mainstream platform model

Finding 5

Radical platform cooperatives outside the mainstream economy are being explored, but remain a fringe phenomenon.

Radical alternatives

- A few platform initiatives in high income countries (i.e. Japan, Spain and the UK) and upper middle income countries (Argentina) are attempting to evolve a new cooperativism founded on principles of reciprocity and solidarity.
- Some are building models in the communitisation of care, while others have pursued radical alternatives in cooperativist marketplaces using social cryptocurrency.

SSE platform: data design as linchpin

Techno-design choice



Data minimalism

Choice of network scale

Localised worker-client network

Data imaginary

No worker-client profiling

No intelligence-based market
expansion

Techno-design choice



Data maximalism

Choice of network scale

Hub and Spoke, centralised network

Data imaginary

Expansive data mining

User profiling & targeting

Techno-design choice



Data collectivism

Choice of network scale

Peer-based, decentralised network

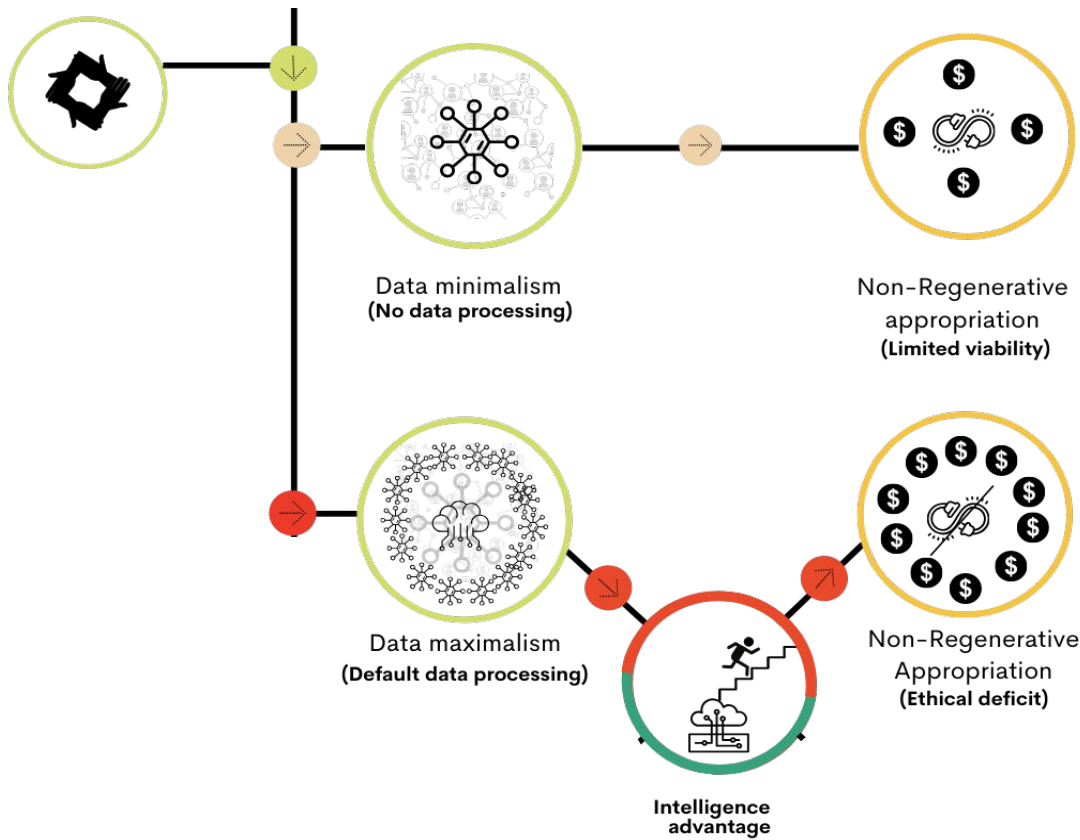
Data imaginary

Agency-centric data pooling

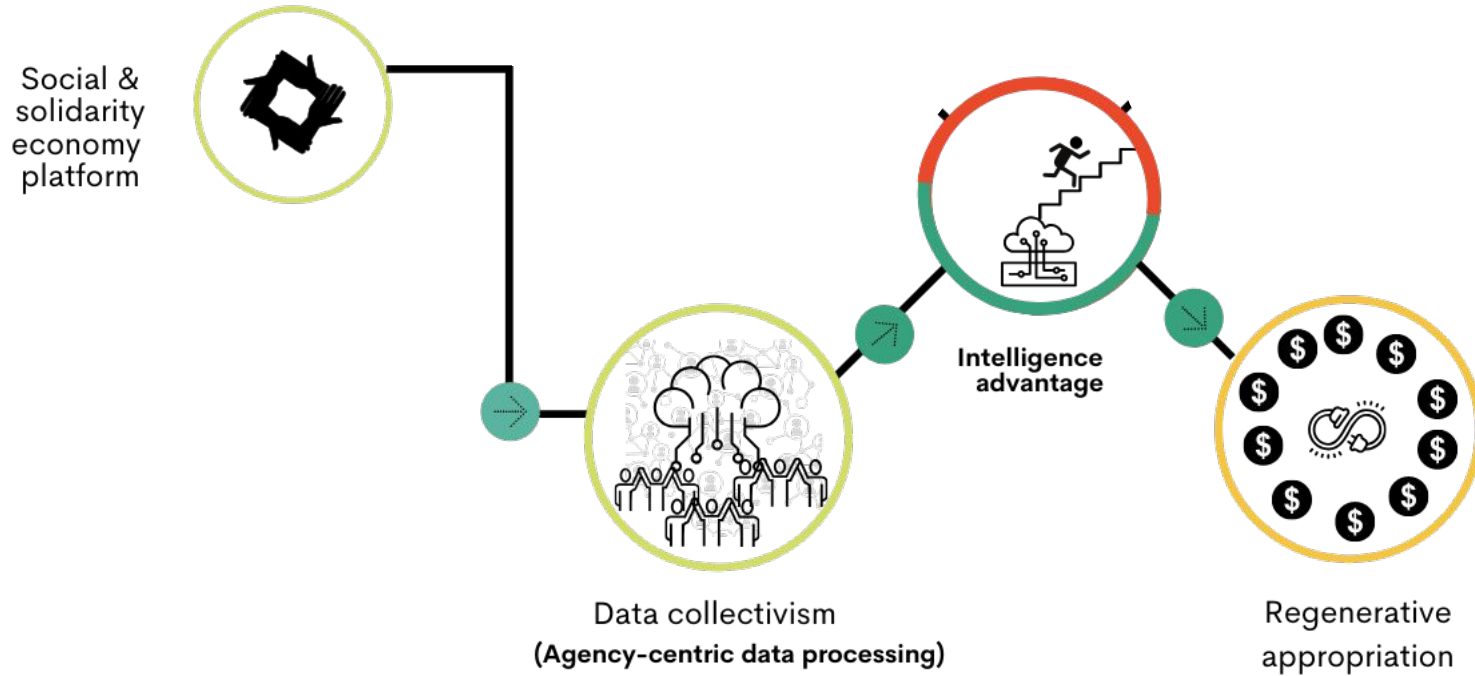
Purpose & time limitations on data use

Which choice is optimal?

Social & solidarity
economy platform



The two extremes of data negation and data maximalism



Data collectivist pathways to regenerative appropriation

When workers enter the field of production, they face a stark contradiction – how can they pursue the necessary strategies for market success without ending up mimicking the very capitalist enterprises they seek to break free from or end up liquidating the business because of failure to play by the rules of the predominantly capitalist market forces?

- Rosa Luxemburg