Platform Cooperativism

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Why did we select this research?

Sharing economy platforms are frequently maligned for their tenuous relationship with 'employees'. In this article, Trebor Scholz explores the emerging ideas and challenges behind platform cooperativism, an approach to building a fairer, more worker-friendly sharing economy.

Key findings

Platform Cooperativism is a relatively new idea, borne out of the traditional worker co-operative model, and updated to address issues posed by the digital age. Scholz defines Platform Cooperatives as businesses that "clone the technological heart" of firms such as Uber, Task Rabbit or Airbnb, but are owned and operated by unions, cities, worker-owned co-ops or other forms of cooperatives. In this way, they aim to distribute benefits more broadly than today's mainstream sharing economy platforms.

Scholz provides examples of existing platform cooperatives and draws on these as well as an imagined ideal to describe 10 principles of platform cooperativsim, including ownership, decent pay, transparency and data portability, and co-determined work. The author also explores how challenges, such as efficient self-organization and management of workers or intense competition from established multinationals, pose risks to uptake and sustainability of platform cooperatives.

Reference

Scholz, T. (2016). Platform cooperativism. Challenging the corporate sharing economy. New York, NY: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Retrieved from: http://www.rosalux-nyc.org/wp-content/files_mf/scholz_platformcoop_5.9.2016.pdf