

# Coops and the digital economy

## 4.7 View “Platform Coops: An Infographic Connecting Cooperatives with the Digital Economy.” (9 minutes)

Platform Cooperativism Consortium. “Platform Coops: An Infographic Connecting Cooperatives with the Digital Economy,” infographic, posted from the original at <https://platform.coop/about/why-platform-co-ops> (July 25, 2017) to <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/platform-coops-connecting-cooperatives-with-the-digital-economy/2017/08/21> (<https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/platform-coops-connecting-cooperatives-with-the-digital-economy/2017/08/21>)

Platform co-operatives as an alternative way of organizing and owning in the digital economy has arisen several times in what you have reviewed thus far. This brilliant info-graphic designed by the Platform Cooperativism Consortium and hosted on the P2P Foundation site puts all the pieces together into a powerful tapestry of the possible.

## 4.8 Read “How the European Social Enterprise SMart is Creating a Safety Net for Freelancers.” (6 minutes)

Stark, Kevin. “How the European Social Enterprise SMart is Creating a Safety Net for Freelancers,” December 12, 2017, on Resilience.org and originally published by Shareable. <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2017-12-12/how-the-european-social-enterprise-smart-is-creating-a-safety-net-for-freelancers/> (<https://www.resilience.org/stories/2017-12-12/how-the-european-social-enterprise-smart-is-creating-a-safety-net-for-freelancers/>)

Think of artists who are trying to transform their talent into a livelihood, and the questions they have to tackle, like the following. “How do I set-up a company?” “How do I make myself known?” “How do I meet fellow people who are working in the same field?” “How do I find clients?” “How do I learn new skills?” “How do I reduce the risk of unpaid invoices?” “What happens if I become ill?” These questions prompted the start-up of Belgium based SMart over 20 years ago. Today it has 90,000 members in Belgium, and 20,000 more across eight other European Union countries and a diversity of freelance work sectors. In recent years it has become a co-op and members have significantly reduced the complexity of their lives and increased their security.

## 4.9 Watch “Platform Co-op Showcase 3—Green Taxi.” (16:19)

Wiener, Jason. “Platform Co-op Showcase 3—Green Taxi,” video, 16:19, originally posted by Internet Society to Livestream, November 13, 2016. <https://livestream.com/accounts/686369/events/6514903/videos/141632691> (<https://livestream.com/accounts/686369/events/6514903/videos/141632691>). Also available through P2P Foundation, accessed January 21, 2019. <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/looking-back-on-platform-cooperativism-building-the-cooperative-internet/2017/11/05> (<https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/looking-back-on-platform-cooperativism-building-the-cooperative-internet/2017/11/05>)

Diverse sectors of the digital economy are subject to a range of efforts aimed at increasing the security of workers through democratizing ownership. Green Taxi is the dramatic story of the rapid disruption of a

100% corporate dominated industry in Denver to one where worker-owned Green Taxi captured 37% in two years. It witnesses to the results that can be achieved when a digital platform and worker ownership are combined. Pay close attention to the increased benefits generated by and for workers and the fact it was launched through member financing. Keep in mind the Multi-Level Perspective and the importance of organizing to change the rules at the “regime” level. Reflect on the politics involved in changing the rules necessary for Green Taxi to be unleashed.

#### **4.10 Watch “Platform Co-op Showcase 6—ICA Group.” (first 10 minutes)**

Kerr, Camille. “Platform Co-op Showcase 6—ICA Group,” video, 28:21, posted by Internet Society to Livestream on November 13, 2016. <https://livestream.com/internetsociety/platformcoop2016/videos/141639581> (<https://livestream.com/internetsociety/platformcoop2016/videos/141639581>)

Child care is identified by the ICA Group (Industrial Cooperative Association) as dignified work that is not treated as such. ICA Group is a national co-operative development intermediary that provides organizing, technical, and legal assistance to groups across the U.S. In this presentation, Camille Kerr introduces the opportunity, research, and organizing the ICA group is engaged in to improve the desperate circumstances of workers in this sector and the families who need affordable and reliable home care. Key to their work as an intermediary is partnering with community level actors, trade unions with interest in particular sectors, and allies within local and State governments. Kerr powerfully sets out the strategic importance of worker-owned platform co-operatives in making it happen.

#### **4.11 Scroll the stories at the Platform Cooperative Consortium. (12 minutes)**

Platform Cooperative Consortium, website, accessed January 21, 2019. <https://platform.coop/stories> (<https://platform.coop/stories>)

#### **4.12 Scan “Strengthening the Movement for a Cooperative Digital Economy Through the Platform Co-op Development Kit.”**

Platform Cooperative Consortium, “Strengthening the Movement for a Cooperative Digital Economy Through the Platform Co-op Development Kit,” webpage, accessed January 21, 2019.

<https://platform.coop/stories/the-platform-co-op-development-kit> (<https://platform.coop/stories/the-platform-co-op-development-kit>)

The applications of digital tools and co-operative platforms are extending into a variety of sectors in different countries. The trade union backed child care co-op being developed by the ICA Group in Illinois is one example. The three below illustrate evolving applications involving very marginalized workers. Read the stories of the refugee women in Hamburg (posted August 31, 2018) and Brazilian garbage pickers who do 90% of the recycling in that country (posted September 3, 2018). Take a look at another innovation on this site, the Indian women’s trade union co-op, SEWA, which is developing a platform (posted September 14, 2018). These will give a sense of how platform co-operatives are beginning to be used to reduce the precariousness of livelihoods in the South and among people fleeing violence. And, while you are on the site, also look at the work in designing The Platform Co-op Development Kit, a project that will help guide people around the world in their efforts.