


Chapter 7

Proposal of a Technological Platform to Support the Activities of a Charity Organization

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ABSTRACT

Nonprofit organizations are constantly challenged to find new ways of finding new donors and sources of funding for their solidarity actions. The traumatic events that occurred in the summer of 2017 in Portugal that caused more than 100 deaths consumed by the fires caused these organizations to have difficulties in coordinating the whole wave of solidarity generated in the community. In this sense, this study has developed a technological platform based exclusively on free technologies that allowed these entities to receive donations and manage this whole process. The application developed enables the reception of anonymous donations and monitoring the status of each donation. Furthermore, several requirements in terms of compatibility with mobile devices, usability, security, and privacy were implemented in the platform.

INTRODUCTION

The social and solidarity economy is seen by Laville & Defourny (2007) as the set of economic activities subject to the principle of democratic action, where social relations of solidarity take precedence over individual interest or material profit. The social and solidarity economy presents itself as a type of alternative economy in which the logic of the market is distinct. While the capitalist economy focuses

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on the accumulation of capital, based on individual interests, the solidarity economy is organized based on human factors. According to Borzaga et al. (2019), the solidarity economy favors social relations and adopts community forms of ownership.

The social economy has as a fundamental objective to address the main flaws of traditional economic models like the lack of participation and mobilization of citizens and the instrumentalization of action by government agencies and companies. With the emergence of the social economy comes the idea that although the market has a place in modernity, there is also a place for solidarity. This is a new way to face reciprocity in an equal way, between free and equal citizens. At the same time, and as Sahakian (2016) argues, there must be forms of production based on this voluntary and equalitarian commitment.

In a period characterized by the explosion of inequalities, the social and solidarity economy can affirm its role as an element of resistance and transformation. This type of economic model is based on the perspective of a plural economy, in which varied economic logics are combined (i.e. reciprocity, redistribution, and the market). Its legitimacy depends both on its capacity not to align itself with capitalist or bureaucratic models, and on its capacity to strengthen real cooperation between its various components.

The social economy has necessarily a relationship with the public sector. Considering the three main lines of action of the public sector (i.e., production, redistribution, and regulation), the social economy assumes a complementary action. The social economy participates in the production function by providing collective utility services in all sectors. Also in the redistribution function, the social economy plays a relevant role by offering a better distribution of income. Finally, in the regulatory function, the role of the social economy emerges in supporting employment policies and in its intervention in solving the problem of unemployment.

It is in this context that different types of organizations emerge. They adopt varied legal and organizational forms, some of them atypical and innovative. Therefore, social innovations arise as a response to new and urgent social problems affecting specific social groups. In this context various types of organizations appear seeking a new relationship with government institutions and the market.

Several types of organizations can be found in the social economy. Traditionally, social economy organizations can be grouped into four major groups: (i) cooperatives; (ii) mutual societies; (iii) associations; and (iv) foundations. However, in each country different typologies can be found. Caeiro (2018) highlights that in Portugal private social solidarity institutions can be identified, in Spain there are labor unions, and in the USA there is a distinction between social institutions on a primary level (e.g., cooperatives and non-profit organizations) and institutions on a secondary level (e.g., mutual societies and organizations owned by workers).

This study comes in the sequence of the dramatic events that occurred in the summer of 2017 in Portugal, in which fires caused more than 100 deaths (ABC, 2017). This situation clearly marked Portuguese society and generated a wave of solidarity. In accordance to this emergence scenario, a set of solidarity initiatives at national and international level appeared, but they showed several difficulties in the coordination of the goods needed by the populations. In this sense, we propose the development of a digital donation platform that can help nonprofit and charity organizations in the process of identifying and collecting the necessary goods needed by populations. The digital application allows solidarity institutions to register and show their humanitarian and social causes. Users will be able to support these causes with the necessary assets identified by those organizations, according to the needs of each cause. The paper is organized as follows: we initially perform a brief contextualization of the project framework describing the growing importance that the Internet has had in the process of incentive and management of the donations. Next, we present the methodology of work, in which we present the requirements and

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