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Social and environmental entrepreneurship in Catalonia

Multiple alternative initiatives in the market appear in Catalonia, taking as reference the social and solidarity economy as models and seeking in exchange and social currencies an alternative lifen. A study carried out by UAB researchers is reflected the new model of economy that we are currently in, where collaboration and solidarity proposals take on significant relevance.

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A study on social and environmental entrepreneurship in Catalonia shows how, as a result of the economic crisis, the number of these initiatives led by university graduates of urban origin has multiplied.

The social entrepreneurship project: *Localembeddedness*, *social networking sites and Theoretical development* - ENCAVE (2013-2016), financed by the Ministry of Finance (CSO2012-32635), highlights the importance of the economic crisis to explain the emergence of the field of social and environmental entrepreneurship in Spain in general and in Catalonia in particular.

Based on the analysis of 43 in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs, from the 93 responses to an online survey aimed at this group and a database that collects information on 347 Catalan

organizations with explicit social or environmental objectives, it has been possible to show how the economic crisis has had a decisive effect on the development of this phenomenon, with 60% of the initiatives appearing after 2008, the year in which the crisis began.
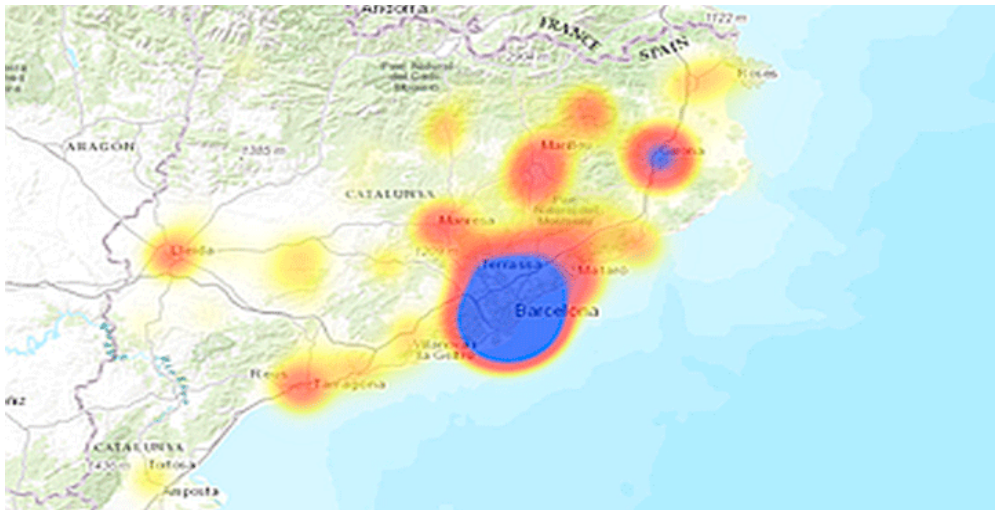
The key elements of this phenomenon are the following:

A context of structural transformation. The increase in unemployment (especially youth unemployment at 45%), budget cuts in general and in the third sector in particular, the disappearance of savings banks and their socially responsable activities (with investments of over 2 billion euros in 2008, rapidly decreasing in the following year until its total disappearance in 2014), and the concentration of the banking sector, are factors that contribute to the emergence of a new field of action: social and environmental entrepreneurship.

Appearance of the label "social entrepreneurship" promoted by banks and public administrations. In Spain and Catalonia, this denomination does not become popularized until 2010, while the most important banks launched social entrepreneurship programs: the Momentum program, sponsored by Banco Bilbao Vizcaya and the ESADE business school, and one year later, the social entrepreneurship program launched by "la Caixa" with the support of the IESE business school.

In 2011, the Government of Catalonia launched the *@EmprenSocial program* to support the development of social entrepreneurship initiatives.

At the European level, the Social Business Initiative was approved in the same year with the aim of increasing its visibility and improving access to funding.

Self-employment of people, with a majority being university graduates, of urban origin, in the services sector, with genuine social and environmental motivations, who launch initiatives mainly with their savings, but also by combining them in a secondary way with other sources of financing and with the support of public and private enterprise creation services.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that parallel to the emergence of this new field of action, multiple

alternative initiatives in the market appear in Catalonia, taking the social and solidarity economy as models and seeking in the exchange and social currencies an alternative life.

In short, we are facing a disputed and rapidly changing field that provides a living space and work for a segment of the Catalan population.

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References

Social project entrepreneurship. **Local embeddedness, social networking sites and theoretical development** - ENCLAVE (2013-2016), funded MINECO (CSO2012-32635). Principal investigator: José Luis Molina,Researchers: Hugo Valenzuela-García, Miranda J. Lubbers, Paula Escribano y Marta Lobato.

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