



WORKSHOP 7: SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE TERRITORY

FACILITADOR: Josep Maria Canyelles

**SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS. Pau Vidal,
Observatori de Tercer Sector Social**

“... if our organizations already have a mission, a reason for existing and we work for society on a daily basis, then why should we be interested in social responsibility? CSR is for companies that only think about making a profit!”. This statement was made by a manager of an important NGO. In meetings with other persons from the sector I've witnessed similar statements: “We already have a social objective, social responsibility is for companies”. Indeed, the main interest in CSR lies within companies and its development has been closely linked to the entrepreneurial sector.

There are several more or less logical reasons explaining why SR has developed mainly in the entrepreneurial sector. However, SR has led to a whole conceptual corpus that raises interest far beyond the company sphere. It contains elements of interest which should be the object of reflection for third sector organizations, who are relevant social agents. Being an organization does not mean that it is sufficient to have “good intentions and doing good” to be considered responsible agents. Non-profit organizations are adopting a firm stance and are raising their voices on the strong need to work with practices which are respectful with society, nature, human rights, etc. And this demand has also been essential to develop corporate social responsibility in the entrepreneurial sector.

We should question ourselves if our organizations, even if they do have a clear social vocations, are fully respectful towards society, the groups with which it operates, the environment and human rights. When this is the case, implementing an adequate model will allow the organization to be fully aware of this and to explain it when necessary. In addition, the reflections that are intrinsically within a social responsibility programme will make it easier for organizations to identify areas where they can improve.

At the *Observatori del Tercer Sector* (Third Sector Observatory) we have developed a model of SR for non-profit organizations (OSR) since 2004. A presentation we gave at the EMES-ISTR Conference in Paris (April 2005) on this model was a great success. Since then we have continued to work on it to complete the model together with entities from the third sector.

The main axis of this model on social responsibility for the third sector is COHERENCE between the objectives and the daily work of these organizations. This coherence is extremely necessary to establish relationships based on trust with society. Only by being coherent and working with trust will

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be gain acknowledgement as true social agents, and not simply as organizations “doing good”.

In the third sector, taking into account the large diversity of existing organizations, we cannot work based on “one-fits-all models” or on “good-bad” dichotomies. That is why the OSR model that has been developed can be adapted to each organization: the level of professionalization, the number of volunteers, areas of action, etc.

Ultimately, non-profit organizations need to have a flexible model that helps them to reflect on the degree of SR they have within society; a model which allows them to identify the areas of interest so that they can improve the way in which they work. The goal is to ensure there is coherence between the objectives of the organization and their daily functioning based on a reflection on several aspects such as its mission, values, staff management, stakeholders, transparency, environmental management, communications, participation in the social environment of the organizations, etc. It is the starting point for an individual reflection within each organization.