



ORIGINS, EVOLUTION AND VISION OF THE SOCIAL CHANGE SCHOOL

Marco Crescenzi, founder and President SCS.

Good morning to all, I am Marco Crescenzi, founder and president of Social Change School.

I will tell you a little bit of history of the school which is interesting also because in some way the school has been at the center and has contributed strongly to the evolution of the Italian and European third sector and therefore also to understand a little bit better on your part the anthropology and how the sector has evolved.

The school was born in Rome in 1997, on 26 September 1997, as ASVI – Agency for the Development of the Non Profit. The denomination Social Change School in reality is subsequent, of 2016, when we became internationalized.

The objective was already from the beginning that of creating a development for the third sector, not doing training in itself. We were the first in Europe to introduce management for the non profit/third sector following, even if independently, Peter Drucker in the USA who was the precursor and author in 1995 of the first book on management of the non profit.

In 1998 the book *The Manager of the Non Profit* written by me was a publishing success that marked a cultural and professional turning point in the sector, it was published by Sperling & Kupfer. In 27 years thousands of professionals and managers have been trained who are active today in over 100 countries of the world and responsible in the main NGOs and therefore we have contributed to form a new leading class of the sector and a professional network of fellows worldwide at world level.

Here are some significant historical steps, with also a vision a little bit of the time, of the evolutions that there have been.

1997 – Foundation of ASVI, Agency for the Development of the Non Profit in Rome with the patronage and the support of the Presidency of the Municipal Council in the Capitol and of the Department of Social Policies. The key question that we posed at the base of the creation of the foundation of the school was: how to have the maximum social impact? And the answer was preparing professionals and managers able to manage and to innovate at best the non profit organizations. Therefore for us the training has always been a lever of social change, not an end in itself.

Still in 1998 we published, after a long research work lasted over a year, the **Guide to the funding for the non profit**. We discovered that it was not true that the sector was oppressed by scarcity of financial resources: this was the perception of the managers, in which it was seen,

starting from a research made by the Association Lunaria, that the main limits to the development of the third sector were tied to the scarcity of financing.

In reality, with this research work we discovered that the financing were many, both national and local and European, as well as fundraising which in Italy still did not exist. To be scarce were not the financing, were the managers who did not know how to see the resources, beyond the public financing. This was a wow moment, an aha moment, in which we understood that the problem were not the financing but were the managerial capacities.

And therefore on this we begin to work: more than in trying to do a service of agency as we had begun, to make known the financing, to work precisely for the managerial training. On this occasion, among other things, we begin to design the Master in Fundraising which was in 1999 the first in Italy, in a moment in which fundraising one did not even know what it meant.

Still in 1998 we published also the guide to the **European funding guide for the non profit**, opening also a service of agency for the research of financing. After that came the first book on **“Il Manager del Non Profit”** in Europe, published by Sperling & Kupfer and Mondadori, which accepted immediately our proposal saying that there was nothing similar in Italy and in Europe.

In 1998 **we introduced e-learning in the third sector** (I use non profit and third sector more or less as synonyms, even if technically it is not very exact) in Europe, allowing the attendance to professionals and managers who certainly could not stay months in classroom. In 1998-99 the school started the **first European Masters in the fields of Management of the non profit**, of europrojecting, of fundraising management, which have been real MBAs for the operators of the sector.

In 2000 we created the **Career Development Service**, which has always been a flagship of the school, which has always worked not only on the placement but also on the mindset of the students, on the character, attitude and behaviors most suitable to face positively the professional challenges.

In 2003 we published the book **Manager and Management non profit, the ethical challenge**, a sort of bible for the management (750 pages and 3 thousand copies), in collaboration with the support of foundations and civic schools of Milan, the UMSA and Alessandro Hinna. This has been a very participatory work, we confronted with the main volunteer networks, with the social cooperation.

Because look that then, we are in 2003, talking about management or marketing in some way made the interlocutors shudder who said: “But we do not want to conform to the profit”. Therefore we succeeded to make understand to the Italian culture that to talk of good management in the third sector meant to speak of good medicine. The example that we made was: “But must not be prepared a good doctor to do his job? And a good manager in the third

sector must not be prepared to manage better his own organizations, to create social development – today we say social impact – to manage his own employees, his own volunteers?”

Therefore this message we succeeded to make it pass. In 2004 we published the guide to the professions of the work in the non profit and we founded an important thing that has been very useful in Italy: the “**Observatory on the professions and of the work in the non profit**”, which inside has had trade unions, university representations, AlmaLaurea, the Forum of the Third Sector and the Ministry of Labour.

In 2005 we made recognize officially to ISFOL, the Ministry of Labour, the managerial profiles of the non profit that had been proposed by the school: non profit manager, project manager of the cooperation, europrojectist and fundraiser. In 2004 the publication of the volume *Campaigns for the non profit organization* edited by Davide Cavazza, our teacher of campaigning and my editor.

In 2005, after a Conference of great success organized in Parliament, the School became **reference for the Italian press on the themes of the work and of the professionalism in the third sector**. In particular elaborating the data Istat we made pass a datum that was widely underestimated in the official estimates, that is the occupational one: one million and 300 thousand workers in the sector in Italy. This was surprising for the media and for the public opinion, convinced that the third sector was a sector of volunteering.

Unfortunately still today also important institutional interventions speak of third sector as volunteering. Therefore something one has succeeded to do, but still prevails, also for convenience of a series of stakeholders, the perception, the equation third sector = volunteering.

In 2005 we contribute to the foundation of Euclid Network, the network of the non profit managers Europeans, which has been thought in London, but then we founded it in Paris and between 2008 and 2011 we created Leader to Leader, the first network of the non profit managers Italians.

2005-2008 – Collaboration with Fondazione Simbola, the foundation for the Italian qualities. In 2007 the publication of the book **Evaluate the quality of the non profit**. In 2010 opening of Third Sector Management, company controlled by London to manage the Master Frame, which has been the first master in English, fundraising management. In that period I was living in London, I lived there between 2007 and 2015 and I have contributed to give to the School an Anglo-Saxon cut, result based, very centered on the social innovation.

In 2011 we have been co-founders of ISIN – Italian Social Innovation Network – and in 2012 we have launched the Master *Mes: Social Innovation, Social Business, Startup Social Innovation Projects*, which has been the first in Italy in the field of social innovation.

In 2014, in collaboration with some NGOs and Agire, the Italian Agency for the Humanitarian Emergency Response, was born *HOPE, Master in Humanitarian Operations and Emergencies*, which has seen many operators train themselves to go on the field in very complex situations.

In 2016 we have made the transfer from Rome and London to Madrid, gradually the school becomes internationalized, both in the seats (with the final quarter in Madrid), and in the activities (all the Masters in English), and in the zones of delivery, in particular Europe and Africa.

In 2018 the school starts the first Master in International Development and Humanitarian Aid – *MIDHA program* – never realized before in Africa, with formula full e-learning, which obviously has important prospects of development and scalability in a continent that from the point of view of the training still offers very little and therefore allowing through the formula e-learning to reach tens of thousands of people.

In 2019 we arrived at the maximum number of students of Master annual: 80, never registered as far as we know in the world by Masters or similar Schools, sign of a trust of who really wants to make the difference acquiring the maximum professionalism.

But in 2021 the pandemic puts the school to hard test: in the period 2021-2025 many among the main competitors fail, the school itself accuses a drop of over the 30% of the students, but decides to invest in loss believing still in the own mission. We have believed in it: if we had not believed in it strongly, we had followed only a logic of economic balance, we would not be here now to confront ourselves and to tell you these things.

2021 to today – I have created personally the network Leaders4Future, which is the network of the general managers of the Italian third sector. It is an important thing because many colleagues, all really excellent persons- for cultural prejudices or simply lack of knowledge with little trust one in the other. A sense of diversity superior to the sense of unity and therefore to potential synergies and who often did not know each other or that when they knew each other maybe they did not trust.

Therefore it has been a huge success because from here has started a collaboration among the main NGOs of the sector. The network reunites all the main general directors of the Italian NGOs and not only, and has started through informal moments – dinners, symposium – which have allowed to let flow the trust, besides good quantities of... prosecco! that have facilitated very much this process.

The model that we have applied is that of **collaborative management**, in brief a problem that has one, someone else has already solved it, therefore it has been a form of accelerator that has involved the directors of all the main Italian NGOs. And besides the exchange on problems there has been and there is a continuous confrontation on scenarios and critical themes: from the relationship with the young to that with the philanthropy, from the leadership to the artificial intelligence, from the role of the representations to the partnerships with the profit, with strong effects obviously on the development of the sector and benefits also for the students of the school.

Here a real system change action that has brought to strong synergies in the Italian third sector among the main managers. **In 2022 we have introduced the Artificial Intelligence** first in the masters in field designing – that is to design with the Artificial Intelligence – and then in the third sector involving the main organizations and the network Focsiv.

In 2023 is designed the **Geomap**, which is the interactive map to identify where the ex students work in the world, in which position, to strengthen the community of the alumni. Therefore if one of you wants to know who works in Sudan, goes on the Geomap and has the names also with the master that he has followed and has the possibility to contact him to facilitate maybe the passage to work there at a local organization.

In 2023 to today, in parallel to the school, we have created **Crescenzi & Partners** which is a company of strategic consultancy and managerial coaching for the third sector, with projects and clients of weight among which Legambiente, Unicef, WWF, Terre des Hommes, Oxfam, Amref, Focsiv, Associazione Pianoterra and many others. This has allowed us also to enter very much on the theme of the coaching and therefore of the mindset, not only of the technical competences and this has been a very important operation also to work with the mindset of the students of the school.

In 2023 is organized the **first conference of the Italian non profit managers – Leaders4Future** – on the themes of the sustainability of the organizations with the support obviously of the school.

In 2024 is designed the action 2025-2030 o **Leading Together – Women Leadership Program** which has the objective to overcome the 50% of women in position of general direction in the first 100 biggest Italian organizations within 2030. The third sector is composed by the 70% of women colleagues, of which however only the 35% is in directive position, while instead the 35% of men expresses the 65% of managers. We have considered, for our responsibility also institutional towards the sector, to have to support a process of gender equality and therefore to rebalance this field, also proposing a mechanism that the feminism of fourth wave has revalued, that is that of the pink quotas.

And therefore we are working on this. Still in 2025 beginning to work to create Leaders4Future in Spain. Still in 2025 another action: we have devised **Space T – Talent Intelligence Acquisition Lab**, which is part of a mission that aims to strengthen offices and HR procedures in the European third sector, with focus on Talent Acquisition and Talent Management and AI based procedures.

One needs to increase the level of talent in our organizations, organizations more smart, in which one succeeds to invest on the talent of each one and one succeeds to recruit, tearing them possibly from the multinationals, the best talents.

We are in conclusion, only to say that when we have begun it was the '900 and it was just the beginning of the Internet and therefore we find ourselves today with the full deployment of the

artificial intelligence. We have always used the technology for social change, from the introduction of the e-learning to the introduction of the artificial intelligence in the third sector, with obviously positive effects both for the sector and for the masters and for the students, and our vision has always been that of a development at 360 degrees of the sector and its people.

Therefore, although the development of the technologies is always more necessary, the DNA of the school and of our staff has always been centered and remains on the relation and on the care of the human development also of the persons, therefore **professional and human development**, not only of the technical competences: “**Better People for a Better World**”.

And it has always made us a bit as a bright star, the saying of Nelson Mandela that we consider a bit our spiritual father: “**Education and training are the most important weapons to change the world**”.

Thank you for the attention and see you soon!