

ORGANISATION WORKSHOP

A Tool for Community Capacitation

February 2003

One of the key development aims is elimination of poverty and this has to involve the generation of viable economic activities for those who are presently marginalised and excluded. A sound market can be built only on the sound foundations of a society rich in human and social capital. By this we mean a society whose members are properly educated and formed in the knowledge and use of social and professional skills. This can happen only if they organise within their communities or when they are genuine owners of their own enterprises, in an 'economy of solidarity'.

Clodomir Santos de Morais is a Brazilian lawyer who was actively involved in social movements and spent 24 years in exile. As a result of his work with peasant communities he developed the theory and practice of Organisation Workshops as a means of enabling those who were economically disadvantaged to develop the skills and experience to organise themselves for the modern economy.

Clodomir argued that in the traditional economy there were 'artisans' who were involved in the complete economic process from manufacture through to sale. 'Workers' are those who have experienced some form of specialization and are concerned with only one part of the economic process. The 'lumpen' are those who don't work or seek work. He argues that the largest group in Latin America are the artisans and they have been left behind in the new economy because their skills are ill suited to the organisation required in 'modern' economic enterprises.

The theoretical basis of OW is that the subject (person) becomes capacitated with the aid of the object (economic enterprise). It is a means through which the person gains entrepreneurial literacy.

The practice is that an OW is arranged for 40 – 700 people which will last from 4 – 6 weeks. The planning group will have identified possible economic enterprises which the participants could undertake and will have obtained the resources necessary to establish these enterprises. The participants are then given ownership of the resources under the guidance of a Director. The participants have then to organise themselves to complete the task of establishing the enterprises. This will require division of labour, an understanding of organisation, accountability of resources etc. The funds are released as participants are able to demonstrate their ability to use them effectively.

This method has been used widely in Latin America and Southern Africa with great success. It has released the potential of those who have been passive participants in the economic process. It has resulted in the equipping of communities with the skills and experience necessary for organising economic activities in the modern world.

The OW in Marsh Farm will be the first to be organised in Britain. This is partly due to the social awareness of some members of the Marsh Farm community who have recognised the need to find methods of people centred regeneration.

DJC 13.3.03 *This material has drawn heavily on A Future for the Excluded by Raff Carmen and Miguel Sobrado which describes in more detail the OW approach.*