

WORKLAB: Manchester Meeting

New objectives for WORKLAB

WORKLAB Meeting
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WORKLAB

What is Worklab?

- International Association of Labour Museums.
- Founded in 1997 = 15th anniversary
- Around 40 members on four continents: workers' museums, industrial museums, museums of political and social history
- Meetings, conferences, projects...
- Website at www.worklab.info

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Worklab Activities

- Common projects like The Migration, Work and Identity (2000-2004) and A Taste of Europe (2009-2011)
- Last conference: Reusing The Industrial past, Tampere, August 2010 with nearly 400 participants. Joint conference of ICOHTEC, TICCIH and WORKLAB.
- Special issue Labour & Landscape at the International Journal of Heritage Studies

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Worklabs committee failed

- Worklabs project took 3 years (2008-2011)
- Application to ICOM was rejected. No international committee for labour, work and social history museums!
- Not enough signatories from other continents and at the moment ICOM prefers less committees than founding new ones.
- Worklab will continue as an independent organisation – flexible but small.

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For me WORKLAB has been...

- a network for like-minded museums.
- a tool for developing EU-projects.
- friends and colleagues in other countries.
- useful when presenting international work.
- interesting conferences and excursions.
- a forum for sharing ideas.
- common publications.
- learning from other museums.
- something of our own.

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Open questions

- How our network can support the development of museums?
- Do we have shared objectives as museums?
- Do we need common projects, exhibitions, publications or what?
- How we keep our network alive and prospering in the coming years?
- Next: 5 stereotype strategies for Worklab...

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Strategy 1: Project Generator

- Concentrating on project applications and practical museum co-operation.
- Good: money for networking can be obtained from external sources. Other networks do not do this.
- Bad: co-operation is restricted on project decisions and thematical limitations. Continuity will be weak. Project groups are not the same as Worklab.

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Strategy 2: Scientific Club

- Concentrating on labour heritage and co-operation in research.
- Good: conversations, conferences and publications will be interesting for us as professionals. Links to universities.
- Bad: funding is difficult and network might be too small to survive. Outcomes might be too theoretical.

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Strategy 3: Museum Chain

- Concentrating on practical integrating of museum work. "Guggenheim model"
- Good: exhibition exchange, marketing, co-operation between museum shops, exchange of professionals, sharing costs, closer co-operation in every respect.
- Bad: Only for similar institutions, difficult and demanding, our stories are national, needs heavy economic input, hard to join.

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Strategy 4: Information Network

- Concentrating on sharing information between Worklab museums with newsletter, blog, social media, website, conferences...
- Good: brings in more members, network looks active, global perspective possible.
- Bad: laborious, concrete outcomes can be rather modest, other networks do this already with existing resources.

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Strategy 5: Parasite Organisation

- Concentrating on co-operation with close organisations like TICCIH, IALHI, some ICOM Committees etc.
- Good: joint conferences and joint action, brings in new people, cost-effective, easy for the board
- Bad: own identity will be weak, low level of commitment, labour heritage easily ignored

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Worklab Strategy...

- Our strategy can have elements from some or even all of the previous stereotypes.
- We need a joint vision for this organisation.
- Running a network is time-consuming. We have to think, what we want to give for Worklab not only what we can get from it.
- To keep Worklab running, we need a project and we need a next conference!

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Thank you!

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