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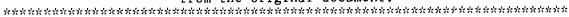
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#### **ABSTRACT**

Members of the Peace Education Commission answered a questionnaire on peace museums. The fi t 60 respondents, representing 25 different countries .applied the results of this report. A majority of the respondents had a positive opinion about the potential values of a peace museum. A variety of definitions of a peace museum were supplied by respondents, and a common definition was difficult to obtain although several remarks stated that a museum should go beyond a static collection of objects and develop a participatory environment. While a few countries had experience with peace museums, most countries seemed to have no peace museum experience at all. Alternative ways of focusing peace museums addressed an emphasis on anti-war, pro-peace or both themes and either a multi-dimensional or specific approach. Potential risks and difficulties such as finances and biased displays were indicated by respondents who also provided suggestions on how to promote the idea of peace museums. (CK)

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# PEACE MUSEUMS AS POTENTIAL INSTRUMENTS OF PEACE EDUCATION

Views expressed by members of the PEC network

Åke Bjerstedt

Members of the transnational network PEC (Peace Education Commission) were requested to answer a questionnaire on peace museums. This report provides glimpses from the answers given by the first 60 respondents, representing 25 different countries. – A majority of the respondents had quite a positive opinion about the potential values of a peace museum, marking the response alternative "The potential value is very great". While a few countries have experience of peace museums, most countries at the present time seem to have no peace museum experience at all. If we believe that peace museums are worth developing (as the majority of our respondents do), we have a huge task ahead of us. A rich variety of ideas on how to promote the idea of peace museums was presented.



## PEACE MUSEUMS AS POTENTIAL INSTRUMENTS OF PEACE EDUCATION

Viewpoints expressed by members of the PEC network

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In the summer of 1993 a questionnaire on peace museums was mailed to members of the Peace Education Commission together with other regular information material. The present preliminary notes report on some major trends in the answers and illustrate the viewpoints expressed, based on a study of the first 60 questionnaires returned, representing respondents from 25 different countries.

## The potential value of a peace museum

The first question is introduced by these remarks: "It is not easy to define what a 'peace museum' is, but let us start with a tentative formulation: 'A peace museum is a systematic collection of artefacts (texts, pictures, objects of art etc.), displayed to the general public: a collection that is either explicitly arranged for or that could be used for the purpose of peace education."

Following these background remarks, the first question (1a) asks: "Defined in this way, how do you look upon the potential value of a peace maseum?" The respondent is instructed to underline one choice among four possibilities: (1) The potential value is very great; (2) The potential value is enough to make further developments of peace museums natural; (3) I am slightly skeptical as to the potential value of peace museums; and (4) I do not see any value in peace museums at all.

The distribution of answers clearly indicates positive reactions: Out of the 60 respondents, no less than 34 chose the most positive answer ("The potential value is very great"), while 15 underlined the second possibility ("The potential value is enough...") and only nine preferred the third formulation ("slightly skeptical"). Two persons gave other kinds of answers: one said that it all "depends on how, when, where, by whom, for whom it is made"; and one hesitated between the third and fourth



alternatives, indicating that the choice "depends". Otherwise, no one chose the most negative answer.

In brief, then, a few of the respondents are slightly skeptical, but a majority are quite positive. Or expressed in another way: About 80 % chose one of the two positive expressions; more than 50 % marked the most positive alternative.

The respondents had an opportunity to make free "comments" on this question. The following are some examples:

- o A great alternative to military/war museums of which we have lots.
- O Peace museums can be important tools to reach people of different age and educational level with a non-violent message that can have an impact on their lives.
- o I would emphasize the word "potential". If such a facility helps to create more awareness of the largely 'hidden" histories of non-violent social change movements and to challenge fatalistic assumptions about the institution of war, its educational contribution is likely to be constructive.
- o I doubt that peace museums would attract much interest in the general public, but would be of interest to "true believers". They may help further educate those who are already well informed.
- o Exhibited attractively, widely publicized and used right, a peace museum could draw a lot of people: project papers, quizzes, etc. could make it a *must* for school classes.

#### The definition of a peace museum

The questionnaire continued: "The tentative definition above could probably be improved in various ways. Please write down some alternative improved formulation, if you have any such suggestion!"

About half of the respondents gave some alternative definition or made some comments about how he or she would like to change the definition. The other half either made no comment at all or a positive comment ("already very good definition", "above definition is adequate") or some comment that dealt with other things than definitions.

It is not possible to say that the suggestions for change represented any agreement as to the *kind* of change. Rather, the changes suggested were of several different kinds, sometimes going "in opposite directions".

Some comments said, in effect, that the tentative definition given was too broad. The definition gave two possibilities: that the collection is either explicitly arranged for or that it could be used for the purpose of peace education. Some of the respondents felt that it would be better to include only museums that are explicitly arranged for the purpose of peace edu-



cation.

Here follow some examples of other points of view or alternative definitions:

- o "A peace museum is a systematic collection of artefacts displayed to the general public to give a historical perspective on peace and to serve the purpose of peace education."
- o "A peace museum is a systematic collection of artefacts (texts, pictures, objects of arts, items and furniture from peace movements, famous pacifists, politicians and others who have contributed to peace), displayed to the general public." (I don't think the peace education part should enter the definition.)
- A peace museum could be more than "a collection of artefacts". It could be an educational and cultural center which points out the different aspects of a particular people's or place's struggle for peace and justice through multifarious activities.
- Try to include in the definition that the peace museum also indicates/ gives examples of how to work practically for peace... The aim or the purpose of a peace museum should be included in the definition for example "to stimulate reflexion and awareness of the importance and meaning of the very concept of 'peace'".
- o If such a facility is to have much pedagogical value, the emphasis needs to go beyond a static collection of artefacts. The emphasis, especially for young people, needs to be on a participatory environment that encourages not only diagnosis of problems of violence but creative imagination about alternatives and proactive skills.

A comment that can be made in passing is that the opinion voiced in some of the answers that a peace museum should be "more than a collection of artefacts" – in the sense that it would be of value to arrange various participatory and interactive ways of meeting the public – is an idea that the present commentator totally agrees with. However, this does not necessarily mean that this mode of operating has to be included in the *definition*, which might be limited to some basic notions. Here we would need a discussion of what we want to exclude in the definition process.

## The existence of peace museums in different countries

A natural question to include in the questionnaire was: "What is the situation with respect to peace museums in your own country?" The respondents were given several ready-made responses to choose from. In addition, there was an opportunity to give other types of answers and explanations.

Obviously, a questionnaire of this type is not the best way to get information about existing museums. A recent and ambitious attempt to map the peace museum situation was made in connection with an international



conference in Bradford, England for directors and staff of peace museums and related institutions. The report from this conference, published this year ("Bringing peace to people", 1993), includes a "directory of peace museums" (p. 35 ff.). I will summarize the information presented in this directory and then simply raise the issue whether the impression gained from this list is confirmed by our questionnaire responses and whether we get some additional information of other kinds from our small study.

In the main list of the conference directory of peace museums around the world, 25 such museums are identified (plus four "projects and plans" rather than existing museums). Ten of these museums are located in Japan, six in Germany, two in the United States and two in Uzbekistan (no other country is represented with more than one museum).

There are two additional lists in the conference report. One of them lists a number of "peace related museums", most of which deal either with the "Holocaust" or with "Gandhi". These could of course be used for peace education purposes, but none of them is *called* a peace museum.

The second additional list contains supplementary information contributed by Terence Duffy, who is involved in a museum project in Northern Ireland. The only country listed with more than one center here is the United States, which is represented by eight centers, one of which is explicitly called a peace museum.

If we compare the information given in this directory with our questionnaire responses, we may note the following. Our questionnaire respondents represent 25 different countries, most of which had no peace museums.

For most of our countries the answer was "As far as I know we have no museum calling itself 'peace museum'" and often also "As far as I know we have no museum that could easily be used for the purpose of peace education".

Three countries stood out in the directories as those most clearly involved in peace museum developments: Japan, Germany and the United States. This impression is confirmed by our respondents. And Japan stands out as the only country – among those represented in our respondent group – where peace museums have been realized on a broader scale. The actual number reported may depend partly on the definition or criteria used. For Japan, ten peace museums were listed in the Bradford directory. One of our Japanese respondents mentions by name 17 peace museums opened from 1955 to 1993 and four additional museums in preparation for 1995 and 1996. Another respondent, Kazuyo Yamane, says, "There are about 50



peace museums in Japan, including the ones in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I myself am the international director of Grass Roots House in Kochi City, which is in the south-west area of Japan." (See also Yamane, 1993.)

Obviously then, while we have experiences in a few countries to learn from, most countries at the present time seem to have no peace museum experience at all. Hence, one general conclusion is: If we think that peace museums are worth working for (and the many answers noting that the potential value is very great would seem to testify to that), we certainly have a huge task ahead of us! So little has been done so far, in most countries.

In this situation, would there be any possibility of "re-organizing" or "converting" war museums into peace museums? This is a thought that is hinted at in some of our questionnaire responses. One of the British respondents says: "The Imperial War Museum in London claims to be a peace museum." And our respondent from Malta even states: "I shall enquire with the museum department to check whether it would be possible to change our 'war museum' into a 'peace museum'." This seems at least an action strategy among others worth further serious discussion.

Another possibility is formulated as follows:

"I would think that linking a peace museum to a 'regular' museum would be a good idea – i.e. as a permanent special display in a museum of natural history, science etc. This way it 'catches' everyone who visits the museum and has more secure funding."

## Anti-war, pro-peace or both?

Peace museums could obviously be built up in many different ways, depending on priorities among possible objectives as well as on the geographical and historical context. One fairly basic aspect was covered in our questionnaire by this question: "A peace museum could be 'primarily antiwar' (displaying pictures and information on the horrors and costs of war etc.), 'primarily pro-peace' (describing ways of working for peace etc.) or both at the same time. What is your reaction to these various possibilities?"

The general trend of the answers of our PEC members is fairly clear. The most frequent answer category was "both". The second most frequent category was "primarily pro-peace". No one, in fact, gave a direct "primarily anti-war" reply. Some made various other types of comment, for example that the character of the museum is determined by the particular situation in the country or region where it is established.

The relative strength of the "not primarily anti-war" feeling in the group



may be a bit surprising if we consider the present peace museums and related institutions, where you easily get the impression that so far the "anti-war character" has often been quite dominant. Perhaps we see a reaction against some aspects of these "first-generation" peace museums?

To supplement this broad overview of the answer patterns, here are some illustrations of the formulations used:

- Would include some anti-war elements, but this adds little. Pro-peace exhibits would be more educational in a positive sense. Also require more imagination.
- o I'll prefer pro-peace. Both are OK, but more emphasis for pro-peace. People do not know what peace education or pro-peace means. I'll use peace museums to teach pro-peace activities. E.g. there should be presentations, activities for non-violent conflict resolution, cooperative games etc.
- o "Pro-peace" would be better, especially concrete ideas for alternative security systems (wider security).
- o I think a peace museum should be "primarily pro-peace", but it would, for the sake of history and truth, be pertinent to exhibit some war-related items and documentation, so as not to leave out the grim reasons for a peace museum.
- o I think they should be separate. For example, the museum in Hiroshima dedicated to the A-Bomb is so overwhelming emotionally I don't think it should contain any other message.
- o While it is important that a peace museum deglamorizes war, a shockhorror approach may simply reintorce feelings of powerlessness and a sense of inevitability about the institution of war.
- o Somewhat depending on local/national/regional circumstances and history, but I would prefer mainly "pro-peace", exhibiting the vision, realities and methods that abound in the peace fields.
- o ... I think the military history of each country influences the balance between "primarily anti-war" and "primarily pro-peace".

## Multi-dimensional or specific?

Another question goes into further details with respect to the preferred character of the peace museum. The fairly long text reads as follows: "A peace museum might be quite 'general' or 'multi-dimensional' (taking up many different aspects of peace and war) or it might be more 'specific'. Among the more specific museums, it is possible to think of many variations. For example, the museum might be 'event-oriented' (focusing on some particular event, such as the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima), or 'person-oriented' (focusing on a particular individual like Mahatma Gandhi or Anne Frank), or 'organization-oriented' (focusing on a particular peace



movement etc.) or 'concept-oriented' (focusing on some key concept like 'non-violence', 'creative solution of conflicts', 'international law' or 'enemy images'). – Thinking about these and other possibilities, which are your preferences? Do you prefer a particular form? Do you think that many forms should be tried? Could you indicate some other useful variation besides those referred to here?"

The answers given are quite varying and thus not easy to summarize, although there was some focus on the idea that many forms of peace museums should be tried and that various combinations of ideas are possible. It is interesting to observe that some emphasis was given to the "concept-oriented" model of a peace museum, since this model seems to be underrepresented in the present peace museum realities and discussions.

The following examples of formulations may be of interest:

- o I prefer a variety of forms. For example, in Lithuania we could establish a concept-oriented museum on nonviolent struggle of Lithuania for reestablishment of independence. The national situation always suggests different forms of peace museums.
- I would prefer a mixture (for example, one room for each) of personoriented and concept-oriented.
- A peace museum should be both general and specific. For example, the second floor can be "general" and permanent, while the first floor is "specific" and changes its contents from time to time.
- O A "general" national peace museum, which every country ought to have should cover the whole field, with a large documentation center. If a group can establish a peace museum, it would naturally relate to their field of work or interest. Exchange of exhibits, guest lecturers, etc., would expand the limits of both kinds of peace museums. ...
- Again would depend on local circumstances; I would strongly suggest multidimensional everywhere supplemented with specific "departments" for persons, events etc. And "concept-oriented" is very important. ...
- Creative solution of conflict The power of active non-violence I think focusing on a concept is wider and gives more ideas for action of the visitors themselves.
- o In Finland museums are financed by either the state or communities, primarily. Especially during the present depression it is impossible to found a peace museum. I believe it is easier to build a specific museum or transform a museum into a peace museum. One way would be transforming the war museums into peace museums.
- O Concept-oriented is the best by far. But use several concepts: non-violence, world government, conflict resolution, peace education, co-operation, etc.



Among the answers there were also some useful suggestions for special materials that could be included in a peace museum. As an example, I will quote some of the suggestions sent by Irwin Abrams:

"My grandson... and I have been working on an album of peace stamps.... We see this as an original way to teach the history of peace. Along with such categories as Symbols of Peace and Words of Peace, we are working on sections on The Forerunners (Erasmus, Penn. Grotius, Kant, et al.); Peace Martyrs (Jaurès, Gandhi, M.L. King Jr., Dag Hammarskjöld, et al.); The Arts and Peace (Goya, Schweitzer, Picasso, UN series, etc.); Buildings and Monuments; Peace Organizations (we include covers); Peace Leaders and Nobel Peace Laureates.

This began with the laureates, since that is the area of my research, but it took off when we began to consider all the dimensions. ... Another idea is to have a page of stamps tell a story, such as the campaign for the prize of Carl von Ossietzky, one of my research projects." (Persons interested in these ideas may contact Irwin Abrams for further information, 913 Xenia Avenue, Yellow Springs, OH 45387, USA: fax +1-513-767-1891.)

### Potential risks and difficulties

Could you see any risks or difficulties in trying to develop peace museums? What risks or difficulties? How could they be avoided? This was a complex of questions near the end of our questionnaire to PEC members.

Almost all the respondents indicated some risks or difficulties. However, fairly few replies tackled the last part of the question, "How could they be avoided?"

The financial difficulties were frequently mentioned. Difficulties in getting peace-related aspects accepted in the community were underlined in some answers. The risks of being boring or biased were recognized in several replies.

A number of formulations follow as illustrations of the broad variety of aspects touched upon:

- o A main problem in Central Europe 3 finances. It could be solved through related activities of peace museums, for example, exchanges of peace activist groups, international seminars etc.
- o Risks none. But I foresee some difficulties particularly for the Third World countries, since this is a very expensive project ...
- There is a general hostility here /England/ to anything called peace as we are still suffering from post-imperial blues ... Therefore schools would hesitate to visit peace museums.
- o At the moment peace museums do not have real status in any country



At the moment peace museums do not have real status in any country apart from Japan. So in forming a peace museum one is really breaking new ground - this is always difficult. The financial climate is not good for any kind of new museum so peace museums have an especially cold climate at the moment.

Who would control, staff and fund? Unless these matters are publicly 0

accountable, there is a danger of misuse.

I can see the risk of being dominated by political and/or military 0 forces (parties, military information departments etc.). Therefore a board and/or council must represent various peace movements (antimilitaristic and pacifistic, religious and non-religious, labour movements and non-labour movements, for example).

Pedagogically, if they are to get beyond preaching to the converted, they need to be inviting, life-affirming, participatory and open to new ideas from various knowl, dge traditions on peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding. They need to avoid dogmatic closure.

The greatest barriers (money excluded) are lack of interest and marginalizing the military (in the U.S. this triggers fears of weakness ... and lack of patriotism). Suggested solutions: make peace museums highly interactive and get military people involved -- e.g., in the U.S., many Vietnam veterans are willing to explain the horrors of war.

Risk if they become more propaganda than educational. Which is a O

particular risk of anti-war museums.

Two risks: 1. A peace museum must not be an alibi for people to think that peace education must not be further developed. 2. A museum tends to focus on what has been developed in history. Peace has to be developed in the future.

Risk no. 1: Economy, there must be security, for both the establishing

and the running.

Risk no. 2: Becoming too nationalistic; peace doesn't stop at your own country's borders!

Risk no. 3: Not giving enough historical background.

Risk no. 4: Being too "dry".

Risk no. 5: Being static. You don't set up an exhibition and then sit

back with your hands in your lap.

Risk no. 6: Waiting too long, so the "old-timers" you should have interviewed have died and their material is either thrown out or divided between family heirs.

Difficulty no. 1: Getting the right people, with proper historical back-

grounds, to take on the responsibility - and stay.

## Promoting the idea of peace museums

The final question included in our PEC questionnaire dealt with support strategies: "What could be done, in your opinion, to promote the idea of peace museums (if you think it is worth promoting)? Do you have any



other comments on this topic?"

A few respondents are somewhat skeptical of the peace museum idea (cf. the answers to the first question above) and indicate that money spent in other ways may be more effective:

- o I have not seen a peace museum. I remain to be convinced that it is more important than e.g. an active U.N. Association. Time and money spent on peace films ... might achieve more.
- While I have doubts about public interest in them, of course it would be desirable to have them. However, in terms of priorities, I believe that peace resource centers are a more cost effective way of influencing public opinion. And the public school systems are a more important and effective, higher priority means of peace education.

However, most of our respondents follow up their positive view of peace museums with a variety of suggestions for promoting the idea, for example:

- Talk about it, wherever it is appropriate or even where it is not. And try with a group to start one that seems to me to be the best way to show it is possible and worthwhile.
- o Make the museum so appealing that it is irresistible. Get young people's idols to support.
- o Make a peace museum project part of the conflict resolution process in a war-torn area and attract foundation funding for it.
- O Put together a group of enthusiastic and *knowledgeable* people, have some sponsors lined up for the project stage, and raise money from government (or local authorities, especially if this is to be a local peace museum), and foundations.
- o I guess one of the problems of promoting or "selling" the idea of a peace museum ... is that it ... strongly connotes retrospectivity and passive viewing of exhibits or artefacts from bygone times. There is, of course, no intrinsic reason why this has to be so. ... in the case of a peace museum, the prime value is arguably not so much historical as one of practical foresight. A "peace museum", if it is to be more than a traditional museum, needs to look creatively at ways of infusing a global futures perspective in its work.
- o First of all, the idea must be well rooted and anchored among organizations with a good reputation, high status, such as the Red Cross, Save the Children, Amnesty International, U.N. associations...
- o I think that mass media plays a great role in promoting the idea of peace museums, for it influences many people and also governments...
- o The idea could be promoted world-wide through UN agencies...
- o Ask all organizations to contribute materials.
- o Support the work of Peter van den Dungen of Bradford University. He organized the international conference, is developing a network, and is the international leader...



- o Promote contacts between existing peace museums. Form an international group to collect ideas and study existing examples...
- O Convert war museums into peace museums! We have many war museums glorifying the nations' past. These museums have to be transformed!
- o Convene an international seminar on The idea of peace museums: Definitions and implementation. (The Foundation of International Studies would be interested in hosting such an event!) /James Calleja/
- o I think a grant is needed to have a planning meeting of high-tech people, museum people, entertainment people, peace people, and public relations experts. Such a meeting could articulate several possible models for an effective peace museum.
- o I think it is a good idea. The first step is to accumulate different experiences in this field and share it. Now you are doing it!

The present brief and preliminary report on the peace museum idea as perceived by peace educators in different countries may hopefully be used in further discussions on difficulties and possibilities in this field. The ideas expressed by our PEC members as illustrated here may be *one* useful starting-point for future thinking and planning in this potentially fruitful field. (See also Duffy, 1993; van den Dungen, 1986, 1993.)

### Conclusion

Members of the transnational network PEC (Peace Education Commission) were requested to answer a questionnaire on peace museums. This report provides glimpses from the answers given by the first 60 respondents, representing 25 different countries. These are some of the observations made:

- O A majority of the respondents had quite a positive opinion about the potential values of a peace museum, marking the response alternative "The potential value is very great".
- o It was not very easy to find a common formula for defining a peace museum. One suggestion that seemed representative of the views expressed by many was: "A peace museum is a systematic collection of artefacts displayed to the general public to give a historical perspective on peace and to serve the purpose of peace education." It was noted in several remarks, however, that such a museum should go beyond a static collection of objects and develop a participatory environment.
- While a few countries have experience of peace museums especially Japan, Germany and the United States most countries at the present time seem to have no peace museum experience at all. If we believe that peace museums are worth developing (as the majority of our respondents obviously do), we have a huge task ahead of us.



- o No respondent stated that a peace museum should be "primarily antiwar". Some felt that it should be "primarily pro-peace". Most answered, however, that it should be both anti-war and pro-peace. The balance between anti-war and pro-peace elements might be dependent on the specific characteristics of the national or regional context.
- Some emphasis was given to a "concept-oriented model" of a peace museum, focusing on some key concepts like non-violence or creative solution of conflicts.
- o Most respondents saw difficulties or risks in trying to develop peace museums. Financial difficulties were frequently mentioned. Difficulties in getting peace-related aspects accepted were underlined by the representatives of some countries. The risks of being boring or biased were recognized in several replies.
- o A rich variety of ideas on how to promote the idea of peace museums was presented.

The positive interest in the idea of peace museums as instruments for peace education was very obvious in most of the replies. Hopefully, the various suggestions presented by this group of people with a special interest and competence in peace education can provide some starting-points for future thinking and planning in the so far underdeveloped, but potentially fruitful, area of peace museums.

Note: A first version of this paper was presented at the European Peace Research Association Conference in Budapest, November 12-14, 1993. – It might be added that while most questions and answers are quoted literally, in some cases slight language improvements have been introduced without special indications in the text.

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