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“A PEACE MUSEUM I WOULD LIKE TO VISIT SOME DAY”

There seem to be three major ideas inspiring peace museums.

The first is the simplest: the **anti-war museum**. The major exhibits would be the horrors of war, not only the callousness and brutality, but also the invisible, long-lasting effects. May be particularly frequently found in countries with a belligerent tradition-like Germany, Austria, Japan-and a people actually not so much against wars as against losing wars.

We would expect, however, such a museum to be balanced in the sense of not only exposing the wars hitting the country hosting the museum, but also the wars emanating from that country. A museum in Hiroshima about the unspeakable horrors of the atom bomb on 6 August 1945 is in order; but one would also demand museums in Japan dedicated to the horrors visited on the countries attacked by Japan. In the same vein, we would expect a museum in Gernika precisely on **Gernika**; but also somewhere in Spain a museum dedicated to the 1925 bombing of Xauen in (then Spanish) Morocco - ordered by General Francisco Franco.

The second is more complicated: the **negative peace museum**. The typical exhibits would describe processes to eliminate causes of war and violence in general. They are many, some are controversial, but exist, like rules *ad bello* and *in bellum*, disarmament, diplomacy, negotiations, mediation, multilateral organizations, individual objectors, peace prize winners.

The third is strangely enough the most complicated: the **positive peace museum**. The typical exhibits would display humanity at its best, in love and friendship, harmony and cooperation, peace in general.

The sky is the limit. The horizon is endless, stretching all the way from micro inside and between persons, meso inside societies, macro between states, nations and indeed between states and nations, to mega, the same as macro but at the level of regions and civilizations.

To give more meaning to these perspectives, imagine our concern was health, not peace. What would correspond to the tripartite division just made? The answers flow easily.

First, the **anti-disease museum**, showing how they work, maiming and killing their victims, carried by micro-organisms, pollutants, the stress of modernity, by violence and war.

Second, the museum for **negative health**, showing the health profession at work preventing and curing disease-and sometimes causing disease, not cure-from distant times in history up to the most advanced diagnosis-prognosis-therapy of today;

And third, the **positive health** museum, showing humans at their healthiest, with "physical, mental and social well-being" to quote the WHO definition. We would see how the outer limits of body achievement in sports are pushed even further out, the enormous creativity of the human mind in arts and sciences when given appropriate conditions, and the kind of social relations that condition and are conditioned by the other two.

To be frank, I have seen museums dedicated to positive peace and to positive health as such nowhere. Why?

Because it is obvious? The obvious can stand repetition and elaboration. That might stimulate imagination and drive the dialectic between the first and second aspect forward.

Because it is controversial? Then jump right into it.

Because people might demand too much? Let them do so.

Which one is the correct approach? All three of course. They presuppose each other, complement each other, and may push us all forward, upward, higher. They are three parts of one museum, almost Christian theology in its unity in trinity.

We could imagine them woven together as three buildings, three sections, three rooms, three walls, in one museum. Let people design their own track. But there could be a track from the first to the second to the third that makes good sense. But running backwards also makes sense, what to do, what to avoid.

The micro-meso-macro-mega distinction might be kept in all three parts. They are surprisingly similar because unresolved conflict is a theme running through all four, causing disasters, crying for a solution. That dark tunnel, the cry for light at the end, opening for stimulating landscapes of peace -.

After horrors and hard work, the Dream. Utopia. What, how? At the micro level: love-sex-marriage (in whatever order), and friendship, and just regular, ordinary decency among human beings. This section would focus on its beauty, not on how it may go wrong and possible remedies, that is for the other two. At the meso level a more horizontal society that combines diversity in gender, generations, profession and location with equality. Even if far from perfect the Nordic societies are not bad at that, but evil tongues whisper, or even say it loudly, that there is not much diversity left.

At the macro level, again far from perfect, the Nordic, EU and ASEAN communities of states are not bad at that, or one state as a community of nations that Spain is aiming at.

At the mega level: the UN trying to do the same for regions and civilizations, and then beyond, in blossoming dialogues.

There has to be something connecting the three buildings-sections-rooms-walls, at all four levels from micro to mega. And what could that thread be? A narrative, of course. We are

not looking for the tragedy with a bad, gloomy ending, nor are we looking for the comedy for something entertaining. These are only elements in the narrative we are interested in. Our concern is with the horror of war and violence, with the hard work to get beyond it. But also with the dream of a world if not without at least with much less suffering due to war and violence.

We want narratives that in no way belittle the problems but at the same time empower is to transcend them.

Utopian? Certainly, and yet feasible. Take the European narrative that started with the blood of above 50 million in the Second world war, then ceasefire, and then a cooperative Europe accommodating the once arch enemy, Germany. And then stretch it further, invite people to paint with the dream colors what an ever better European Union could look like, with no democracy deficit, good at sharing its experiences with war, negative peace and above all positive peace with others.

And under that narrative: Israel/Palestine/Arab States, at war and occupation, rampant with direct and structural violence, countless efforts at mediation, negotiation, processes (and how they could be much improved), and then the jump to a dream, like a young Jordanian journalist once put it:

"In the Middle East where I would like to live I would breakfast in Tiberias in northern Israel, lunch in Jericho in Palestine, and enjoy my night life in Aqaba, by the Red Sea in Jordan." Spell out that Middle East Community in concrete, practical detail, with alternatives, using positive but also negative experiences of the other three.

Take narratives from the personal level. Take a marriage replete with verbal and physical abuse, explore healing efforts, by the partners, with or without outside help, describe the beauty of love as the union of body mind and the spirit, with a life long joint project weaving the partners together even after the children have left the nest to live their own narratives.

Take narratives at the social level. Take class from feudal Europe to social democracy and social capitalism and don't be afraid of displaying the major utopias in literature or reality. Nor afraid of shortcomings, the shadows in the story; nor afraid of reporting narratives that ended up as dystopias instead.

Take narratives at the world level, from war and massive exploitation to the many efforts to settle grievances to some of the more positive ideas behind the greed of Western imperial and post-imperial colonialism, capitalist and socialist, to the tragic absence of world utopias. Like the Jesuit Holy Experiment in colonial Paraguay, how it inspired independent Paraguay into state ownership with user rights to land only for those who use it well, how a rich Paraguay became rich and added manufactures till England mobilized its neighbors in the devastating war of 1874. In what world would that not have happened?

And at the end of that walk, from horror via absence of horror through hard work to the delight of dreaming and seeing some dreams come true, letting the thread at the four levels

intertwine, there would be highly interactive opportunities for visitors to construct their own narratives into the future. Based on own experiences, for good and for bad, at any level.

As mentioned, I would like to visit that peace museum. And its health homologue. Why, what I know. But when, where, how?