

# Promoting Adult Learning in Public Places: Two Asian Case Studies of Adult Learning about Peace through Museums and Peace Architecture

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## Abstract

*This paper explores an area of adult learning that has received little attention of late, the terrain of public education through museums and civic architecture. The goal of promoting adult learning in public places e.g. through the work of museums has become commonplace in countries seeking to encourage adult learning about peace. This invariably entails a 'hands on' approach to peace education through a process of consultation and dialogue with the concerned communities. These aims are particularly important when the municipality is looking at issues of peace, as in the case of the two Asian case studies discussed in this article with societies recovering from a post-conflict situation. These case studies will have especial interest for adult educators in Ireland. In the International Year of Reconciliation in 2009 the Consultative Group on the Past had published its recommendations, including a Commission for Victims and Survivors for Northern Ireland (CVSNI). This paper will show how adult learning in a public milieu can contribute meaningfully to a reconciliation process.*

## Introduction

In promoting adult learning in public places, the governments of Japan and Cambodia, have sought to convey a message of peace, and peace museums and peace architecture provide inspiring and enjoyable opportunities for learners to make meaning in their own way. This is adult learning in the most public of places and it is also about creating a municipal culture of peace. Nowhere can these goals be more important than when societies are recovering from conflict.

Municipal authorities can often make a significant contribution to peace education with adult audiences and thereby encourage an inclusive approach to community peace-building. In looking at the potential for adult education this article explores the emergence of peace museums and the salient issues raised for the wider subject of exhibiting peace. It does this through a discussion of two case studies drawn from the experience of Japan and Cambodia. The experience of this unique form of adult learning in Asia has considerable relevance for what we might be able to achieve in Ireland.

In the twentieth century, Japan and Cambodia endured traumatic human losses. In Japan this arose from the post-WW2 legacy of the Atomic bomb, and in Cambodia, in the wake of the Khmer Rouge's mid-1970s indiscriminate programme of 'auto-genocide.' The respective recent histories of Japan and Cambodia are appropriate exemplars of the problems and possibilities that arise as societies earnestly confront the potentially contentious issues of societal reconciliation and peace memorialisation.

### **Peace through peace museums and peace architecture**

The general public will often view museums more as 'custodians of war memorabilia' than as 'purveyors of a vision of peace.' Thus at the launch of America's first embryonic 'Peace Museum' in Chicago in 1981, its founding director, Marianne Philbin regretted that war memorials were so ubiquitous while her country (by contrast) still possessed 'no proper museum dedicated to building peace.' It has taken much independent initiative to progress the goal of peace memorialisation and so to exhibit those (often intangible) fragments of physical and cultural heritage that might constitute 'a lexicon of peace.' Such an object is meritorious in any part of the world but the challenge is all the more worthy and compelling in countries possessing a recent history as tragic as Japan and Cambodia.

In the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, the Genocide Museum at Tuol Sleng is a visible memory of a society's cavernous physical and mental wounds while across its municipal landscape, Japan's atomic legacy still looms formidably within living experience. For this reason, this article will explore the experience of violence transcendence in these two Asian nations, and seeks to evaluate these peoples have grappled with the construction of memory in a post-conflict

society. This process is particularly important if we are to genuinely understand the challenge of promoting peace through adult learning. There are many lessons that might be learned for our adult learning work in Ireland.

Certainly, the psychological nightmare which haunted post-WW2 Japan, and which cast a shadow over its post war societal reconstruction, is poignantly documented in Robert Jungk's monumental, *Children of the Ashes*. Conversely, Japan provides us with welcome inspiration in the rich contribution (since WW2) that Japanese national and prefectural governments, as well as NGO initiatives, have made to the birth of the modern peace museums movement. Yet the construction of such diverse 'edifices to peace' in post-war Japan has not been without controversy, reflecting (and sometimes accentuating) underlying political tensions. Japan is still decisively split between a peace-orientated 'left' and a rather militaristic 'right.' This is something that the political divisions in Ireland, which pertain on both sides of the border, may help us to understand. In recent years, however, there has been a tangible crystallisation of a peace community across most of the globe. We are beginning to see the evidence of these interests in Ireland and this is particularly reflected in the historical visualisation of our UN peacekeeping experience in several national museums in Dublin and other parts of the country. These facilities offer an important window in Ireland into the study of peace.

More generally, in the past twenty years (especially in Japan, Europe and America) there has been considerable interest in the peace museum idea and in a growing number of countries such museums, and accompanying peace parks and sculptures have opened. The product of state, group or individual efforts, these museums have preserved a robust peacemaking heritage, which has often comfortably co-existed alongside the history of war. Perhaps we can better delineate these very encouraging directions in Japan by dissecting the wider international phenomena of peace memorialisation? This is a genuinely public version of peace education, which is very much based on promoting adult education in the most public of places. A good example in Ireland would be the peace groups represented in the annual May Day parade.

How do societies escape from a legacy of conflict and begin to educate their populations about the importance of peace? It is certainly possible to offer some broad observations about global trends in the creation of 'peace museums' and

kindred examples of the public memorialisation of peace. They are a multi-faceted group. First of all, are the recognised and long-established core of museums that explicitly possess ‘peace’ in their title, and are dedicated to peace education through the visual arts. This would include Chicago’s Peace Museum, the Peace Museum in Bradford UK, Oslo’s Nobel Peace Prize Museum, and indeed more than thirty distinctive museums across the world. Examples span issues of regional peace (such as Germany’s Peace Museum Meeder) to the global emphases of the Peace Palace at The Hague, and the League of Nations Museum in Geneva. It would also include museums of ‘public peacemaking activity’ such as the Museum of the Olympic Games in Lucerne, which documents the remarkable contribution of the ‘Olympic spirit’ to world peace. There is no obvious Irish candidate for inclusion in this list of museums apart from the UN display at Collins Barracks, and the UN exhibition in the National Museum of Modern Art.

This ‘family’ of museums also incorporates the search for peace ‘within peoples’ as in the Yi Jun Peace Museum in Holland whose founder has been lobbying for another Peace Museum strategically sited in the de-militarised zone which joins north and south Korea, to encourage future Korean reconciliation. Then there are many different ‘issue-based’ entities formed in response to specific events. There are quite a number of Japanese museums of this type, such as Liberty Osaka, with its focus on promoting human rights; Tokyo’s Peace Museum Project on children’s peace education; Nagasaki’s Shokokumin Museum with its concern for Japan’s war-time children; and the Poison Gas Museum on Okunoshima Island with its ‘righteous appeal’ against chemical weapons. All of these diverse entities share a common concern with the promotion of a very public type of education, whether for adults or to enable adults work with children. They are excellent examples of adult learning about peace through museums and peace architecture. Irish cases might include the Irish Jewish Museum and the ‘Irish citizenship’ section of the National Museum in Kildare Street.

It is also widely recognised that museums portraying the human devastation of the Nazi holocaust, and kindred museums dealing with other forms of human destructiveness, are rightly part of the peace museum family. Holocaust Museums (such as Yad Vashem in Israel or Washington DC’s Memorial Museum) and interpretative centres at former concentration camps (e.g. Dachau and Bergen-Belsen in Germany, and Auschwitz in Poland); international venues such as Tokyo’s Holocaust Education Centre; collectively deserve to be treated

as part of the increasingly all-encompassing *genre* of peace museums. The same is also true of museum battle-sites. In the last ten years wonderfully insightful peace centres have opened on the European war-sites of Caen and Verdun. An Irish case study would be the Boyne Heritage Site. More generally, on the theme of peace, one would also include museums dealing with nuclear war (such as the peace museums in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki).

There have been several dramatic architectural developments in the portrayal of peace in Japan. Of particular note is the new (1996) Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum that offers a radical re-interpretation of modern Japanese history. Predictably, it has outraged many on the Japanese political 'right.' In contrast, Tokyo's Peace Memorial Museum of the War Dead project, says little about Japanese militarism. Peace researchers will more likely see it as a 'war museum' than one of peace, demonstrating continuing sensitivities in Japan in the promotion of the peace museum concept. This, perhaps, says much about possibilities of promoting peace work through adult education, and especially through public space in modern Japan. That may be a reality that we understand very well in Ireland.

Nevertheless, it is encouraging that even the most grisly of wartime experiences can be transformed into a vehicle of peace education. Other 'issue-based' facilities that contribute to peace memorialisation include museums of genocide, such as the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh, and the several genocide museums and public exhibits in the Rwandan capital, Kigali and the Burundian city, Bujumbura. Lithuania has a Museum of Genocide Victims in Vilnius. Similar proposals are under advanced discussion in Nigeria's Ogoniland (for the Ogoni people) and in Ottawa (for Canada's native population). Then there are an impressive collection of museums that focus on the humanitarian achievements of stalwart individuals or virtuous charitable societies, such as the Florence Nightingale Museum in London, Italy's Red Cross Museum at Castiglione, the Henry Dunant House or the International Red Cross Museum (the latter two being small private museums in the Swiss 'peace' city of Geneva). Out of the reality of human tragedy, insightful curatorial work has crafted a public space for adult education about peace. One might regard the 'civil war' section of the National Museum Dublin as one of the closest Irish comparators, especially with its emphasis on the birth of the new Irish state.

Geneva is not alone in finding municipal support to keep alive the tradition of peace culture and peace memorialisation. Other examples would include the Franz Jagerstatter House in St. Radegund, which memorialises the courageous German conscientious objector Dr Jagerstatter; the Carter Centre (the peace and democracy complex assembled by President Jimmy Carter in Atlanta, Georgia) or the Woodrow Wilson House in Washington DC, which is dedicated to the peacemaking activities of the 28th US President. Then there are ‘museums of non-violence’ - notably the more than fifty Gandhi museums in India (National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi and the Gandhi Memorial Museum, Madurai). Gandhi museums and exhibitions are also across Europe, Australia and the US. Our ‘peace theme’ might also include museums dedicated to particular non-violent campaigns, such as the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, which explores the American Civil Rights movement. When the municipal authorities in Japan and Cambodia turned to the memorialisation of peace, they already possessed a solid basis for direction and vision. It is reassuring to know that adult learners in Ireland also have some pertinent examples from which to draw.

### **Tokyo’s Peace Memorial Museum**

Precisely what might constitute a ‘peace museum’ and the manifest complexities of the ‘peace’ phenomena is controversially illustrated by two recent Japanese case-studies: Tokyo’s Peace Memorial Museum of the War Dead, and the completion of Nagasaki’s new Atomic Bomb Museum. These two ventures are controversial examples that are illustrative of the conflicts in modern Japanese society, suggesting that many post-WW2 issues remain unresolved. They therefore merit further serious discussion. Certainly the proposal in the 1990s of a quasi-mausoleum to the ‘war dead’ to be constructed in the Japanese capital proved something of a litmus-test both for current Japanese thinking about WW2 and for its peace movement. Many international commentators perceived the erection of what is essentially a ‘national war memorial’ as a ‘macabre leftover’ of the wartime generation. The debate was really about the espousing of a particular kind of ‘adult education’ that contained a very blinkered view of the concept of peace. These are debates with which we are familiar in the depiction of our own troubled modern history.

The Tokyo venture has also been interpreted as an ‘acid-test’ that might defoliate or at least expose the camouflage concealing these politically hostile patriotic sentiments or ‘closet militarism’ of that Japanese generation. Others see

the venture as more insidious, contributing to the renewal of precisely such ‘war-time sentiments.’ Located in the very centre of what is iconographically the essence of politically ‘rightist’ territory in Tokyo, this initiative preserves many of the ‘sacred cows’ of a conservative political tradition. Tokyo’s Yasukuni Shrine – with its symbolic associations with the Japanese ‘war effort’ abuts unto the ‘Peace Memorial Museum of the War Dead.’ One man’s peace may well be interpreted as another’s ‘war.’ It would be naive to assume that Japan has eluded the pervasive sentiments of its post-war legacy. The same might be said about the memorialisation of the Civil War in Ireland.

The Tokyo memorial is very nationalistic in its treatment of the issue of peace and the causalities of the war. Little is said about the dead of other nations, the lives of occupied Asian peoples, about exploited Korean ‘comfort-women’ or about ‘forced war-time labour.’ Yet these topics are impressively exhibited elsewhere in Japan by such innovative galleries as the Osaka International Peace Centre, Kochi’s impressively activist-orientated Grassroots House, and the visually resplendent Kyoto Museum for World Peace. These latter institutions (respectively) reflect the progressive composition of the ‘Peace Osaka’ Committee, the community-focused Kochi peace activists, and the very independent stance adopted by the university authorities that run the Kyoto Museum. Ironically the latter’s host, in eastern Kyoto, Ritsumeikan University, was one of the Japanese imperial universities that contributed many recruits to the Japanese officer corps during WW2. Nowadays, Ritsumeikan is a noted liberal campus with a strong international ethos. An Irish comparator might well be how we have come to terms with the legacy of our civil war institutions and indeed nationalist historical ideology.

Refreshingly, some of the militaristic themes explicit in the ‘Peace Memorial Museum of the War Dead’ are articulately challenged in other (more intellectually progressive) Japanese museums such as the Saiki Peace Memorial Hall Yawaragi, the Oka Masaharu Memorial Peace Museum in Nagasaki (which devotes generous space to highlighting the aggressive actions of Japanese forces); and the Peace Museum for the People which, by portraying the suffering of all soldiers, world-wide, ‘hopes for the coming of world peace.’ The issue of ‘presenting peace’ cuts to the heart of the debate about war guilt and the pressure for governmental apology and societal atonement. It could be argued that in common with the Jewish Shoah or holocaust survivors, Japan’s atom bomb hibakusha may well be prone to political exploitation. At any rate these are certainly

weighty and sensitive matters. Just as the Smithsonian's failed 1995 exhibition on the Enola Gay indicated the strength of the USA's veteran lobby- the debacle occasioned by this project, illustrates the gulf that splits Japanese society on the issue of war responsibility. Where peace is concerned, promoting adult learning in public spaces still remains a potentially taboo subject. These are matters that Irish society is going to have a tackle as we grapple with reconciliation processes on both sides of the border.

It is a truism that debate on the issue of global peace remains a touchy topic even in modern Japan. These matters have yet to be genuinely confronted, and the Tokyo project has exposed the paralysis in attitude that exists among conflicting 'interest groups.' Sadly, it seems unlikely that the impulses impacting on this project would permit its metamorphosis into a credible peace museum. The museum is destined to enshrine memories of the Japanese 'war dead' at the expense of exploring 'global peace' and is unlikely to afford much comfort for those in the Japanese peace movement who have struggled to give genuine focus to issues of peace. The 'War Dead's Memorial Peace Prayer Hall' could prove to be a symbol of the residual divisiveness of Japanese public opinion. Happily, elsewhere in Japan, there is evidence that public education for peace has taken on a much more innovative and less nationalistic character. There are municipalities such as Osaka and Nagasaki where there has been an enormous emphasis on enlightened and progressive peace work, but across the country there remain pockets of strongly nationalist sentiment. To some degree that urban-rural contrast might also be true of present-day Ireland.

### **The metamorphosis of Nagasaki's International Cultural Hall**

The Nagasaki International Cultural Hall, predecessor of the new Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum, was constructed in 1955 to house a rather conventional and politically noncontentious set of artefacts illustrating the city's nuclear tragedy. A fine account of the Hall's history is given in the classic study, *Nagasaki Speaks: a Record of the Atomic Bombing*. The original building was a rather traditional structure housing a vast collection of photographic material of the Atomic destruction, but eschewing any political interpretation. Indeed the photographs rather were left to 'speak for themselves.' Generations of Japanese families visited there. However, the new Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum marks a remarkable departure in the portrayal of issues of war and peace in Japan. It represents one of the most important developments on these issues in recent years. In April 1996 this substantial new museum was opened after an enor-

mous effort of strategic planning and quasi-philosophical cum political debate. The museum is actually inspired by the vision of Mr. Hitoshi Mutoshima (a politically progressive mayor of Nagasaki) who has been systematically attacked and victimised by the Japanese ‘right-wing’ because of his enlightened utterances about Emperor Hirohito’s un-acknowledged ‘war responsibility.’ We know very well in Northern Ireland (especially) how both communities have criticised peace educators and so it is interesting to see that the debate about peace is as lively among educators in Japan.

Mr. Mutoshima hoped that the new Nagasaki museum would place the bombing of Nagasaki in an objective historical context. Its planners were certainly convinced that the museum must make reference to Japan’s aggression in order to promote international understanding. Significantly, in March 1996, ‘rightist’ extremists objected to the inclusion of a photograph of the Nanjing Massacre, and soon after the museum’s opening, demonstrations via loud-speaker cars were conducted at regular intervals by ‘right-wing’ organisations. The new Nagasaki museum marks an important step in Japan’s fundamental re-interpretation of WW2 and its imaging of the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This process has not been without controversy but with this pain there has also come healing. The Nagasaki Museum might be viewed as part of a nation’s emerging sense of dialogue with the ghosts of the past. One hopes that this process will ultimately prove therapeutic. It is a potent symbol of a very public approach to education for peace in modern Japan. It is therefore a very good example of a new variety of adult learning about peace through museums and peace architecture, and one that undoubtedly has potential lessons for us as adult educators and learners in Ireland.

### **Peace through adult learning in the public milieu of modern Cambodia**

From the nuclear ‘holocaust’ of Japan at the end of WW2, we turn to the ‘human holocaust’ of Cambodia’s 1970’s genocide years. During the 1970s Cambodia suffered the so-called ‘year zero’ of the Khmer Rouge who had seized power in 1975 with a determination to re-fashion ‘Democratic Kampuchea.’ This long period of political turmoil was followed by economic neglect and international isolation, that reduced the Cambodian population to the status of one of the poorest countries in the world. The UN Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC), which commenced work in 1992, sought to inject into UN programming a pervasive concern with human rights and peace. During the years of Khmer Rouge rule (1975 to end of 1978) Cambodia endured probably the

most violent of modern revolutions. The challenge of promoting peace through adult learning in Cambodia is a formidable one. The experience gained from this important work has great resonance for all involved in education for peace in our own countries.

Cambodia also has yet to confront the political legacy of its past. Its new government has not been reluctant to use peace education for political purposes. The memory of the ‘year zero’ is still a politically potent one. It seems probable that under the Khmer Rouge a greater proportion of the population died than in any other revolution in the twentieth century. Many of the victims were of the Lon Nol elite. However the majority were not part of the Cambodian old order and their execution was merely symptomatic of the desperate efforts of the regime to secure itself against potential opposition.

To do that, it created a massive torture machine, and sanctioned extra-judicial killing, and, ultimately, wholesale genocide against Cambodia’s various religious and minority groups. To be precise, what Cambodia experienced during those harrying years was a gruesome form of ‘auto-genocide’ as the foci of inter-communal violence and retribution switched and alternated from ethnic and religious minorities to alleged internal dissidents. Interrogation centres were located in Phnom Penh and in the provincial towns such as Tuol Sleng. When the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia in 1979, the Khmer Rouge had left behind them at the infamous camp S-21 a massive catalogue of systematic human rights violations that recorded the elimination of nearly twenty thousand people. It is a challenge to write about this subject as a peace educator, but the same must be said about issues of violence and interrogation in all our countries, including controversial issues of extra-judicial killing, torture etc. during the conflict in Northern Ireland.

In 1979, the State of Cambodia (SOC) turned Tuol Sleng Prison into the Tuol Sleng Museum of Cambodian Genocide and its burial camp at Choeung Ek was shortly thereafter made accessible to the public. Tuol Sleng represents a monument to the calculated social destruction of an entire society. Fortunately, the past few years have seen a gradual confrontation of this tragic period of Cambodian history, and a new vision of a ‘more peaceful present.’ There are lessons for Ireland here. In the controversial proposals to re-cast the Maze pris

on in Northern Ireland as a Conflict Resolution Centre, it was feared that the prison might become a ‘shrine of the republican struggle.’ Educators were also aware that the Maze prison held painful memories for both communities in the North. It may be an acid-test of the failure of the communities to adequately confront the divided legacy of their atavistic past, that this proposal has gone no-where. It may be hoped that in the future, like Tuol Sleng, the Maze site could become a place of genuine peace and reconciliation.

Today Tuol Sleng Museum is a frightening exhibition of what a people can be forced to endure. Open for public eyes are the detritus of torture units and mass detention sectors, and (still) more psychologically moving are the stark rows of photographs of the many victims who died during interrogation. One begins to ponder how these images can really be used in the search for peace? But one should not despair, as modern Cambodia has creatively re-visioned these years of abject poverty and political tragedy. The result is striking to the visitor. Just as Cambodia has dealt with this painful place, no doubt Ireland will come to terms with the physical legacy of the Troubles. In this process, peace educators have a vital role.

In Tuol Sleng the main part of the museum is a photographic kaleidoscope of genocide victims. Most of the camp’s captives were photographed prior to execution. These images have been powerful tools in the politicisation of Cambodia’s past, but might also serve as valuable resources in the conceptualisation and memorialisation of its peace. Certainly from Northern Ireland experience, it has been in the embracing of a politically contested urban morphology and a highly visible ethnic territoriality, that we have been able to talk about peace. Political graffiti and sectarian posters have allowed us to explore our divided past, and perhaps to move towards a more diverse present. If this can be effective in a country like Cambodia, it should be achievable by adult learners in Belfast or Derry.

### **Can genocide become peace? Examples from Cambodia**

It is very much a vision of hope that the detritus of violence can be re-cast to serve as a resource for promoting peace. S-21 was the largest of a network of interrogation centres that existed across Democratic Kampuchea. Choeung Ek (where almost nine thousand skulls have been counted) was the burial

ground for Tuol Sleng. The Vietnamese-installed government in their calculated political strategy to further discredit the Khmer Rouge exploited it. Once secure in power, the Hun Sen administration and its party stalwarts adopted a depressingly similar posture. It is only now, with a well-established national and international NGO movement, that Cambodians are genuinely confronting their past from the perspective of peace. In just the same way, community activists in the Catholic and Protestant communities are confronting these issues in the streets of Northern Ireland.

Yet for the Cambodian people the present potential of Choeung Ek as a vehicle for the reconciliation for Cambodian people is enormous. Indeed it could become a symbol for world society of the tragedy of human destructiveness. Predictably, the genocidal years of the Khmer Rouge have been used as a political platform by the Cambodian establishment in order to justify the exigencies of their own governance. Tuol Sleng swiftly became an instrument of propaganda by focusing hatred on its predecessor. This is all the more exasperating since most of the leaders of that Vietnamese-installed government, including Prime Minister Hun Sen and Minister Heng Samrin, had been Khmer Rouge officers. Today, even as they lie in un-named graves, Cambodia's blameless victims are exploited. This is a very potent vehicle for peace education and has enormous potential as a resource for adult education in post-genocide Cambodia. We are well aware of the sensitivity of the concept of 'victim' in Ireland, and especially in the North. One only hopes that a time will come when peace education will genuinely confront these issues. Adult educators should always be wary of exploitation. However, there is a necessity for Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek to play a constructive part in a process of consensus-building in Cambodia. Interrogation centres and concentration camps have been re-cast as 'museums of peace' in other countries. In Cambodia these camps cannot indefinitely remain such lucrative pawns in the power games of the political elite. They must take on a new post-conflict identity that might allow them to assist in the painful reconciliation of collective memory.

Such a transmogrification is vital if Cambodian society is to advance beyond the wretchedness of its recent historical experience. Cambodians have a saying about the horrors of their recent past: 'We were all conspirators- we were all victims.' It is time that Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek become symbols of an un-repeatable tragedy in Cambodian society so that the survivors can find

forgiveness and hope in what remains. Perhaps this can be part of a broader social and psychological process that may take Cambodians at last beyond their 'Killing fields.' One hopes that Cambodia's increasingly active NGO community can have the self-confidence to encourage such adult learning through its genocide museums and tragic peace architecture. It is a sign of hope that this is beginning to happen in Northern Ireland, and indeed on both sides of the border.

Slowly, post-genocide Cambodia is beginning to re-interpret its grisly past and to see in the country's most tragic of public spaces, the potential for reconciliation and peace memorialisation. There is clearly enormous potential for innovative examples of adult learning about peace through Cambodia's museums and peace architecture.

### **Conclusion: Adult learning about peace through museums and peace architecture**

The field of adult learning about peace through museums and peace architecture is now well established. Plans are under way for an African Peace Museum in Kenya, for a network of peace entities across Europe, and a new national peace museum in the United Kingdom is a real possibility. Moreover, many 'conventional' galleries have in recent years chosen to prioritise their exhibitions to include materials directly related to peace and to the peace movement. A good example is the remarkable metamorphosis of London's Imperial War Museum. Much maligned as 'trapped in a general's conceptual time-warp', the Imperial has shed its 'war-skin' to emerge as a genuinely discursive laboratory of ideas. It is undoubtedly true that even the mechanisms of war can be re-spun as powerful images for peace. Just as the legacy of the Irish troubles can be re-cast as a vehicle of reconciliation, peace educators can benefit so much from a comparative perspective.

It is a salient point, however, that what distinguishes 'war museums' from 'peace museums' lies less in physical heritage and content, than in the conceptual approach of the individual curators. The Victim's Memorial initiative in Northern Ireland has attempted to relate this concept to practical efforts of peace making and reconciliation. The project commenced in the city of Londonderry/Derry in 1987 and has provided a forum for public exhibitions on peace and human rights issues. This is both a problematic and challenging

subject given the proximity of the museum to the reality of political conflict in a place which has seen some of the worst violence of 'the troubles'. It is a tribute to the success of the project that it has attracted broad cross-community support for its work, and that its exhibits have objectively explored aspects of the experiences of both sections of a divided community. At the same time, it is a symbol of the tendentiousness of the issue, that so many state initiatives for victims on both sides of the Irish border, have met with such controversy.

Adult educators might usefully take from this experience the key message that such initiatives must have public confidence and must be genuinely inclusive. There can be little dispute that such education, with the goal of promoting peace culture through the visual arts, is implicitly and explicitly part of that process. The examples we have explored from Japan and Cambodia exhibit aptly both the potential and the challenges of promoting adult learning in public places. Certainly adult learning about peace through museums and peace architecture is a potent force for good. As we celebrate the International Year of Reconciliation in 2009 let us hope for a public learning in these islands, which truly embraces such a culture of peace. A peace museum or a public symbol of community reconciliation on either side of the border may be an important focus for adult learning in the future. It is about building bridges, and in that process such peace architecture can prove a salient conduit.

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