Temporality in the work of Shigeru Ban

Shigeru Ban is the world renowned architect whose work has been recognised for its form, functionality, use of unconventional materials and, above all, for its function in supporting people in emergency situations. After the Russian invasion on Ukraine, thanks to his efforts, with the support of Hubert Trammer from New European Bauhaus Round Table and volunteers, the Paper Partition System (PPS) was set up in Poland within days. PPS is a system consisting of paper tubes and fabrics with which large spaces where refugees or victims of natural disasters gather can be partitioned off into small rooms that provide a sense of privacy. The next step in the aid activities for Ukraine was the realisation of the Styrofoam Housing System (SHS) prototype unit, which was built in June 2023 in Lviv. SHS was intended as a day-care centre for IDPs’ children. Next to the support for Ukraine, Shigeru Ban is constantly involved in relief architecture in different parts of the World. In March 2023, Shigeru Ban initiated the implementation of the PPS for the victims of the earthquake in Hatay Province Turkey, and in May, the construction of the Paper Log House a temporary building that serves as a classroom. This interview was held on the way to Lviv, where on 30th of June 2023 the SHS prototype was presented as one of the possible ways to support victims of the war in Ukraine.

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made a temporary office on a boat on the River Seine. He said it was the same legacy to start with the temporary office. A building added on top of an existing building had to be very lightweight. That was the reason why a paper tube structure was chosen. It was also appropriate to make the Studio without connecting it with the existing building, as we were not allowed to do that. I created a lightweight structure, just sitting on the terrace without any connections. I built the Studio together with my students from Japan and French students. Moreover, after the experience with the Japan Pavilion for Hannover Expo, I was already familiar with European permission to use the paper tube for the structures, the temporary structure. Therefore, I used the same diameter of tube because it had already been tested in an earlier project. It had already been tested in an earlier project. Moreover, after the experience with the construction of the Centre Pompidou in Paris, I was already familiar with European permission to use the paper tube for the structures, the temporary structure. Therefore, I used the same diameter of tube because it had already been tested in an earlier project. It had already been tested in an earlier project.

**SB:** Yes, normally if we call the design permanent, a client can make a decision to vary things easily. For example, after the main cathedral in Christchurch was destroyed by the earthquake nothing was decided as to whether it would be rebuilt like original design or something new would be built. Actually there were three proposals, and rebuilding the original cathedral was the most expensive. Therefore, people were arguing between three options. And even now, after 10 years they can not make a decision. That is why they use this temporary structure almost as a permanent one. And, the building also met the local regulations.

**JŁ & MMB:** Do you think that religion has any influence on that? That people somehow, let’s say spiritually, got attached to the structure, and they want to keep it for the longer time.

**SB:** It’s not the case, it’s because they can’t make a decision about how to rebuild the old cathedral. But even if the old cathedral could be rebuilt they may keep the Cardboard Cathedral permanently because it became a very famous symbol and it’s a tourist destination. So, we don’t know, it can become permanent...

**JŁ & MMB:** Is there any life-span predicted for this cathedral, was it designed for some specific timeframe?

**SB:** As a permanent structure.

**JŁ & MMB:** For the design of the Japan Pavilion for the Expo in Hannover in 2000, you worked with Frei Otto, Buro Happold, Sonoco Europe (paper tube producer ed.) and many other partners. What makes architects, engineers, contractors and stakeholders invest money, energy time and resources into a project that is only temporary? How can you convince so many different partners to get involved in just a temporary structure?

**SB:** Expo originally was an opportunity to try innovative structural solutions as prototypes. In history there are many new structures that were proposed for Expo and became trendsetters. At the Expo in Osaka in 1970 for example, the American Pavilion was an air dome for the first time, and now there are many such solutions all over the world, another example is Buckminster Fuller’s dome pavilion in Montreal in 1967. Traditionally Expo was kind of field for architects and engineers to try something new as an experiment for the future. This is why, even if it’s temporary, it is really worth to making the difficult but innovative. However, now, not that many countries make innovative pavilions anymore.

**JŁ & MMB:** You are currently working on the new pavilion for the next Expo, which will take place in Osaka in 2025.

**SB:** And I am actually the only one who makes an innovative structure, using carbon fibre, paper and bamboo. Other pavilions are just a stylish things, nothing innovative.

**JŁ & MMB:** Those pavilions, they are three domes, will they be temporary, or is some future life predicted for them?

**SB:** Thank you for the conversation!