

The Purpose of Developing the Sekisui Heim M1

This is an attempt to clarify the concept of development of the Sekisui Heim M1, by quoting from my own book “Today’s Private House and the Entity of the Living Environment”(SD Book Selection 105), which I wrote in 1976.

To address the turmoil and the shortage of housing after WW 2, public systems were put into place so that housing could be built on a massive scale. However, at the same time, new urban problems emerged.

The issues of turmoil and the dissolution of cities, the collapse of communities, as well as environmental problems could all be traced to one and the same root; the existing prototypes of housing, the housing production system and of the living environmental systems all failed as responses to the rapid reform of the social system, generating a substantial loss of balance among them.

On one hand, housing suppliers including the government and municipalities, were engaged in unilateral supply, based on their respective methods; on the other hand, there existed occupants who only “received the built-up environment.” In such circumstances, it was at first difficult to bring about dynamic action to create an appropriate environment as a response to the occurring reforms.

But eventually, a change in consciousness came about; stability replaced growth and people began to think about their own lives, instead of the production issue. A trend began in which people started to think carefully about their housing and their living environment, enabling the gradual creation of the housing prototype of that time. Up to that time, mass housing construction was the only priority. In other words, the only concern on the housing agenda was the flow. However, people started to demand housing which included overall qualities; high durability in particular, and high flexibility which made houses adjustable to diachrony and to changes in living environment. There was a need for housing which made up the social stock of a good living environment. These movements triggered the development of the Sekisui Heim M1.

In the past, private houses had been made rationally, creatively and in a well-balanced manner, beyond time and space, maintaining the balance among the respective factors; the natural environment of villages, communities, production capacity of materials, and labor power.

In order to make better living space and the entity of the living environment, I believe that it is necessary to identify today's prototypes of living style and production technology; namely the prototype of "building", reviewing the prototype of the private house and the system of building a village, which had been forgotten in the midst of the rapid changes.

As a re-starting point to establish a method for creating houses and a living environment, it was necessary to apply the methodology of the prototype of the pre-war private house in order to structure the system of today's private houses. This also took advantage of current highly developed system technology and industrialized technology. It is meaningless if the number of the housing supply is the only consideration. It is necessary to think of the quality level of the housing; high durability and flexibility in response to changes of requirements for the entire occupancy period of the occupants. Namely, the value as a social housing stock is the key issue. In addition, as the level of consciousness of the habitants is elevated, a social system of flexibility which facilitates improvements or moving to a new place is required. The social system also changes as an assembly of complex dynamic factors. Therefore, unless the principles for the living environment are identified, further turmoil and unproductive activities will be repeated. These principles are ones which were applicable in the past, and are in the present and will continue to be in the future.

Industrialized technology had once been regarded as a cause to unilaterally force human beings to accept the manufacturers' logic. However, accompanying its further advancement, industrialization for humans finally emerged, which fully maintain the diversity and the uniqueness of locality much like an ecological system, and which enable the enjoyment of the benefit of industrialization when used properly.

With the aforementioned background and way of thinking, the Sekisui Heim M1 was developed, which was a housing supply system based on the unit construction method, enabling a high rate of industrialization in the production process.

The facts that were realized by this system are first; the costs, which had risen because the organization of the construction industry and the material supply routes were stratified based on the manufacturers' preferences.

These costs were reduced by integrating production processes and material procurement into the factory as much as possible. The part of these savings was redirected to improve the performance and the quality which enabled the house to be desirable stock. Also, application of a simple system, combining only one size of unit which has a space with no fundamental purpose, led to a housing supply system by which the residents themselves can participate in the construction process of their own house. When individual habitants come to handle this system well, they can respond dynamically to changes in their circumstances, thus forming an adequate social stock.

Creating such a living environment was our primary goal.

Ohno Atelier

1st Class Registered Architect Office

Katsuhiko Ohno, Head

Personal History

1944

Born in Fukushima/Japan

1967

Graduated from Architecture course of Tokyo University

1972

Doctorate awarded for thesis “Building consisting of parts” in Uchida seminar (post-graduate course of the same university)

1971

Opened Ohno Atelier, 1st Class Registered Architect Office. Involved in unit housing design, town-forming design, urban-type housing design, etc.

Writings

“Today’s Private Houses and the Entity of the Living Environment”

; Kajima Publishing Co.

“Networks of Regional Housing Studios”

; Shokokusha

“Present-day Nineteen minus Seven Towns-forming Design”

; Maruzen

“Transcript of Lectures at JKK Housing University” (Joint wo

rk); Shogakukan Square