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SINGAPORE:
FROM
GARDEN CITY

TO CITY
IN A
GARDEN

ANDRAMATIN
THE SCULPTURE *MUSHOLLA*

IDIN ARCHITECTS
HABITIA-H CLUB

MM++ ARCHITECTS
OCEANIQUE VILLAS

AEDAS
8 NAPIER

STUDIOMAKE
PATANA GALLERY

WONA
PARKROYAL AT PICKERING



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➤ Colin berpendapat, perubahan visi Singapura tidak serta-merta sebuah kenaikan level, tapi usaha kalibrasi ulang dari visi sebelumnya. Pada prinsipnya, memang terdapat perbedaan antara visi “*Garden City*” dan “*City in a Garden*” dalam hal volume taman. Namun menurutnya, visi “*City in a Garden*” sudah menjadi tujuan Singapura sejak awal.

Ia berpendapat demikian karena keberadaan tim-tim yang saat ini bekerja untuk mewujudkan misi tersebut tentu bukan hasil perubahan pikiran yang mendadak. Lebih dari separuh luas Singapura yang terlihat hijau di foto satelit tidaklah terjadi secara kebetulan. Visi “*City in a Garden*” sudah ada sejak beberapa dekade yang lalu.

Bagi Colin, terbitnya kebijakan pemerintah untuk mewujudkan visi “*City in a Garden*” merupakan hal yang sangat menarik. Namun, ia mengaku tidak banyak terlibat dalam desain yang mengharuskannya mematuhi berbagai aturan tersebut. Pasalnya, Colin dan timnya lebih banyak berkarya di luar Singapura (banyak di antaranya terbangun di Malaysia). Hal tersebut mungkin terkait dengan terbatasnya luas wilayah Singapura, yang berdampak pada terbatasnya eksplorasi desain.

Meskipun demikian, Colin terdengar tidak keberatan jika dihadapkan pada situasi yang membuat desainnya dibatasi banyak peraturan. Ia menganggap peraturan—yang biasa dianggap orang sebagai ‘kesulitan’—sebagai

garis batas atau perimeter desain. Menurutnya, pembatasan-pembatasan itu akan menciptakan keluaran desain yang berbeda, dan itu menarik.

Colin selanjutnya merasa, ia berada pada kondisi paling kreatif dengan hasil akhir proyek paling menarik ketika ia dihadapkan pada batasan-batasan yang ketat. Dengan demikian, ia dapat menemukan cara cerdas dan bermakna untuk merespons peraturan-peraturan tersebut. “*So I think total freedom—for us as architect—is antithetical to our creative process,*” demikian pendapat Colin.

Interviewer: Dini Kusumawardhani | Writer: Sandra Forestyana

“The change in Singapore’s vision is not necessarily a level increase, but it is more of an effort to recalibrate the previous vision.”

Colin Seah is the founder and principal of Ministry of Design Pte Ltd, an architectural firm in Singapore. Previously, he worked at OMA Rotterdam and Studio Libeskind before starting his own independent architectural practice. Besides practicing architecture, he also taught at the Department of Architecture, National University of Singapore as a senior tutor for four years. Up until the year 2014, he has won a number of awards and is active as speaker in various international architectural events.

Colin Seah adalah pendiri sekaligus pimpinan Ministry of Design Pte Ltd, sebuah biro arsitektur di Singapura. Ia pernah bekerja di OMA Rotterdam dan Studio Libeskind sebelum memulai praktik arsitekturnya secara mandiri. Selain berpraktik, ia pun sempat mengajar di Department of Architecture, National University of Singapore sebagai *senior tutor* selama empat tahun. Hingga tahun 2014, ia telah memenangkan banyak penghargaan dan aktif sebagai pembicara di berbagai ajang arsitektur internasional.

Colin Seah • Ministry of Design Pte Ltd, Singapore

Colin believes that the change in Singapore’s vision is not necessarily a level increase, but it is more of an effort to recalibrate the previous vision. In principle, there is a difference between the “Garden City” vision and the “City in a Garden” vision, especially in terms of the amount of parks. However, according to him, the “City in a Garden” vision has been Singapore’s goal from the beginning.

His opinion emerged from the fact that the teams currently working to realize the vision are certainly not the result of a sudden change of mind. More than half of the total area of Singapore that looks verdant in satellite photos is not the result of a happenstance. The “City

in a Garden” vision has existed since a few decades ago.

For Colin, the issuance of government policies to realize the “City in a Garden” vision is a very interesting thing. But he admitted that he is not too involved in designs that make him comply with these regulations. The reason is because Colin and his team mostly work outside Singapore (many of their designs were built in Malaysia). It may be due to Singapore’s limited area, which inevitably puts a limit on how much design exploration they can make.

Even so, Colin sounded like he would not mind if he has to face the situation that makes his

design constrained with many regulations. He considers regulations—something that many other think of as hindrance—as boundaries or perimeters of a design. He believes that these restrictions will result in different design output, and it is exciting.

Furthermore, Colin feels that he is at his most creative—with his most interesting project result—when he is confronted with strict limitations. This is when he discovers smart and meaningful ways to respond to the regulations. “So I think total freedom—for us as architect—is antithetical to our creative process,” said Colin.

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Writer: Imelda Akmal

When we conferred with Peter Schmal, the writer of the monograph of WOHA, he explained how Singaporean architects struggled to create a workaround for the strict regulation on buildable floor area in a single building. Singapore, aware of the problems of crowdedness and environment, put balconies as part of gross floor area ratio, thus reducing the ‘quota’ of building area that can be utilized by the users. On the other hand, this country is constantly ‘going after’ green open spaces and green areas to give positive impact on environment and humans.

Here, WOHA—and also other Singaporean architects—sought a way out, one of which is by offering green solution vertically in several ways: green roof, green wall, and green balcony, so that green enclosed areas are increasing in number. The government gave a positive respond by giving an incentive of bearing fifty percent of the cost for green retrofitting. Singapore then

commenced the initiative to increase green areas from 2,500 ha to 4,500 ha. A very spectacular figure.

This initiative is believed to give birth to new innovations in architecture. Singaporean architects’ interest and attention to greening efforts should be equal to their interest and attention to architecture itself. How do Singaporean architects react to this initiative? What consequences does this change in regulations bring to their designs?

In this volume’s cover story, we present various articles based on our interviews with spources such as Jason Pomeroy, Colin Seah, and Ko Shiou Hee. An essay written by Prof. Dr. Johannes Widodo and an interview with Prof. Ir. Moh.Danisworo, an Indonesian architect who once lived in Singapore and an expert in urban issues, complement and enrich the coverage and discussion about Singapore’s latest grand ambition to be the “City in a Garden”.