

Boomtown: The miracle of Singapore

Happy Birthday! A journey through the 50th, once poverty-stricken city-state, which has its Swiss example caught up and overtaken in many respects.

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The Bishan Park: Although more than 10,000 people living in one square kilometer, is astonishingly green Singapore.

The streets are narrow and winding, in the doorways are Velos, in the crowns of trees gnarled birds chirping. A poster invites you to "Multiracial Gathering - multi racial Assembly" a (strange, how to deal with the concept of race in Singapore - but more on that later). Here, in the district Tiong Bahru, the first state-owned residential buildings were built in the thirties. "Veery old," says a passer-by to me, pointing to the four-storey building, which seem tiny compared to the skyscrapers that rise behind it. Over eighty years old - that's almost prehistoric for Singapore. Anyway, old enough that you have a Heritage Trail, a historical walk developed.

That sounds ridiculous from a Swiss perspective, for Singapore, it is revolutionary. It's a miracle that ever so old buildings exist - most had to give way skyscrapers. Not only because it took place for the 5.4 million people who are piled up as high as the canton of Glarus in an area. No, the houses of formerly interested simply no: Singapore thought for decades, only forward. At school there was not even the subject of history. For Nation Building was taught: Man cleared the children to more than Singapore's various ethnic groups, Chinese, Malays, Indians and Westerners - that seemed the state more important for a harmonious coexistence than memorizing dates.

But now, on August 9, Singapore celebrates its 50th anniversary. And suddenly story is sexy! Suddenly we remember the past. If you ask people on the street what they think of the Jubilee, all say they are proud. And me? Am I proud of the centuries-old history of Switzerland? Not give a damn. For of course it is me. Note for me: history is not just the view in the past, but also what makes a society of it. I walk on Orchard Road, the main shopping street of the city. It is bordered by faceless shopping malls and - squeaky clean. Nothing is on the ground. No scraps, no piece of cucumber, which has fallen from a sandwich. In no underpass it stinks of urine. It is scary. I think so, the Indian tourists feel at the Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich. At every step I'm taught about with posters that tell me that I should take unsweetened drinks on me that this was healthier. At pedestrian crossings tells me a blackboard: «it Blinks green, stand still better." That no one is interested to happiness: There are quite a healthy dose of civil disobedience in Singapore.

Higher level of prosperity than Switzerland

An orange Maserati roars past. A little later, followed by a Ferrari. Color: acid green. Singapore has developed into one of the richest places in the world in a few decades from a developing country. The country has a higher level of prosperity than Switzerland. Full of joy the newspapers write that Singapore was the most expensive city in the world. Because you do not think: shit, here everything is way too expensive. But wow, what we can afford everything! Every superlative is a compliment (which does not mean that you do not go for shopping to the more favorable Malaysia ...).

In Raffles Hotel, one of the finest remaining buildings from the British colonial era, I meet Sabine Silberstein. She lives since the mid-nineties in Singapore, sits on the board of the Swiss Abroad Council and leads interested in art through the city's museums. She says: "Something like the drama of the construction of the Zurich football stadium - this is unthinkable." A few years ago the government decided they needed a new stadium. A little later it was built. "There is an incredible dynamism." Shadowing? Furthermore you can only laugh here. "Singapore is run like a big company," says Sabine Silberstein. That's because it does not define democracy quite as democratically in Singapore as ours. Consensus is not particularly important in a one-party system. Critics call Singapore as democratorship: a camouflaged as democracy dictatorship. While the citizens may choose, but for fifty years ruled the same elite. The acting prime minister is the son of founding father Lee Kuan Yew, who died in late March the age of 91.

In the Metro. All doze or tap on the phone around. I drink my Starbucks cappuccino. Until I noticed the sign: 350 francs coaches who drinks or eats in the Metro. Help! The legislation is - well - very rigid. Homosexuality is illegal and who is caught with 15 grams of heroin, which face the death penalty. A Swiss graffiti artists who had defaced railway wagons, was sentenced a few years ago to five months' imprisonment and three strokes of the cane. So modern Singapore comes so incredibly archaic it can be.

I arrived on my journey at "Marina Bay Sands", this giant hotel with a pool in the shape of a ship on the roof. XXL projects are in Singapore normality (in Switzerland would speak of megalomania). Singapore has since its inception figured that a country with so little space needs a master plan. Currently, to build next to the "Marina Bay Sands" a whole new district: Marina South. There have to come one day, two million people (!). The government expects that the

density in Singapore by 2030 will increase by 3,000 people per square kilometer: on 13 700 people. By comparison, the density of the Swiss Plateau is 426 people per square kilometer.

"Density," says Gillian Koh, "is something we have to live in such a small country inevitably. But the question is: How can we convert density into something positive." Gillian Koh is a researcher at the Institute of Policy Studies. I meet them in their office in the icy Law University in the middle of the botanical garden. They offered tea. Gillian Koh says: "The best parties are always the ones where all successive sit tight." Density should not necessarily mean that you have to compromise - one could even win something. "The satellite towns within Singapore have swimming pool, tennis center, school, doctors." No single family can offer that.

That is true - but from private homes in Singapore dreams eh no. In other words: If you dream of, there will always remain a dream - too expensive is the limited space. One is resigned to the fact that there are many people in the world that it will close. Which does not mean that is not gemotzt in Singapore on immigration: The Metro is too crowded to clog the streets. The announcement of the government to come in the next few years two million workers in order to maintain economic growth, caused an outcry. Which in turn the government worried: She wants satisfied citizens; Riots in Hong Kong as one fears. And so it has limited the work permits from one day to the next. However, there is now a new problem: The service in the restaurants has become worse because now instead of hardworking Filipinos bored students are hired. And in some hotels, the rooms are not cleaned, because you had to return the cleaning ladies in their home.

Green Singapore

Although full of skyscrapers, Singapore's amazing green. Trees line the streets, huge parks through the city. Who lives compacted, has just more space for green areas. Sure, everything is man made - so what? Green is green. Note for me: Just because something has been planned on the drawing board and has not grown over the centuries, it need not necessarily be bad. While we are discussing in Switzerland about how we want to protect the few unspoilt areas, Singapore wrestles the sea from space to become greener. The Gardens by the Bay - a 54-hectare botanical garden - were built on reclaimed land.

"It's impressive what Singapore has achieved with smart strategic decide everything," said Emilija Georgieva. She is Deputy Ambassador of Switzerland. I meet them in the Swiss Club, the largest private landowner in Singapore. On the meadow are plastic cows, the restaurant sold Mövenpick Glace. Emilija Georgieva says there is only so little opposition to the ruling elite, because the government made a lot of good decisions and global trends has identified early. "Singapore has always had a clear vision." In the seventies, it was the increase in living standards and the eradication of poverty, today is the aging of society in the center. "It concentrates its forces on a few themes - the rest you can do for the time being left," said Emilija Georgieva. So exactly the opposite of our Giesskannenprinzips.

Singapore gladly engaged in the work. "What's your next career step?" Is a question that one often hears. More than half of the workforce are women, part-time jobs do not exist. While the average income per capita is adjusted for purchasing power higher than in Switzerland, but the vast majority does not deserve more than 3,000 Singapore dollars, or about 2100 francs. "People

work very much, the presence time is high," said Emilija Georgieva. "And the theme work-life balance does not even exist." Still, people do not act stressed than those on the Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich on Orchard Road. Also they have a clear goal: money, success, career.

Then you will already trimmed as a child. Everyone wants, everyone needs to be the best. Recently there was a study in which they asked children around the world, which is their greatest fear. Most replied: "That my mom or my dad dies." In Singapore, they said: "The fact that I fail in an examination." That caused a stir. What has changed - nothing. The University Town for example, is a collection of strivers. The cafes are almost empty, the students sitting in the library. My God, when I think back to my university since time!

"The ambition of Singaporeans, we cannot understand the Swiss," says Urs Gerber. He moved four years ago to Singapore. I meet him and his wife Kweelin Gan - a Singaporean - in the Financial District, where they both work. Urs Gerber says: "For a Swiss Gymischüler it goes without saying that he can attend university. In Singapore, on the other hand you have to fight for it." How different hard work is perceived, the pair looks to his parents. Urs Gerber says: "My mother is worried that we are working too much. My wife's father is worried that we are referring too many holidays. "

Family planning is subject to state control

Urs Gerber and Kweelin Gan take me to the Arab quarter, where we eat Murtabak, filled flatbread. From a mosque heard the call of the muezzin. Kweelin Gan told that she had recently seen a TV which showed a happy family. What is the advertising ?, wondered Kweelin Gan. An insurance? A bench? At the end came the slogan: "Babies - think about it." It was a state advertising to raise the low birth rate. Twenty years ago, located Kweelin Gan recalls, as they wanted to prevent large families, the advertising slogan sounded quite different: "Stop at Two", it was then called. Please no more than two children! This is Singapore: The family planning is subject to state control.

From the Arab quarter I walk to Little India. Here is clear to me: What do we mean in Switzerland under multiculturalism, Singapore can not describe approximate. The proportion of people who are not born in Singapore, is 43 percent. In Switzerland, there are 29 percent. However, integration is defined quite differently than with us: The goal is not the adaptation of newcomers to the local customs, but the harmonious coexistence. So nobody feels discriminated against, all signs in the four national languages are written - Chinese, English, Malay and Tamil. And also the government apartment blocks are embarrassed divided precisely on the four ethnic groups of Singapore.

Little India is perhaps the only place in the city where romantic schmaltz on the sidewalk rippling from stores where waste lying around and sometimes it stinks of smelly feet. The only area where my man behind hisses cheeky. In other words, Little India is one of the few places in this otherwise rather sterile state that have a soul. Note for me: Much, but not everything can be planned on the drawing board. Sometimes in Singapore the border to Disneyland is simply too thin.

Which does not mean that cannot inspire us of the successful city-state. Singapore is well positioned for the future, probably better than Switzerland, far too good at it like itself, to reflect on its roots: So it has always been, so it should stay. Singapore is the opposite. Singapore knows exactly where he wants to go where it should be in twenty years - we do not even know how we want to shape after the mass immigration initiative, the relations with the EU. Singapore looks forward to the future - we are afraid of her. Singapore wants to create something new - we want to preserve the status quo as possible. I wish us a slice of this irrepressible desire, to decide on the future - and full of energy it's going to run.

BEST OF SWISS

"Singapore has become like Switzerland," said state founder Lee Kuan Yew in 1967 after his visit to Switzerland, two years after the independence of the poverty-stricken state. Back then complained Singapore high unemployment, slums, a desolate infrastructure and poorly trained workers. Why Switzerland was declared a role model? The reason are the many similarities: Singapore is like Switzerland a nation of consensus, the country is small, limited space, you are surrounded by powerful countries, and the company speaks different languages.

So Swissair became the model for Singapore Airlines, by the Swiss Army took over one the idea of WKs, and banking secrecy was virtually 1: 1 copies. For lack of raw materials, Singapore focused on a large service sector, focusing Finance. With an attractive tax system were enticed corporations into the country, fifty big banks now have their Asian headquarters in Singapore. Immigration was seen as an opportunity: With foreign labor to offset the shortage of domestically - just like Switzerland. Also in diplomacy copied to Singapore gladly accepts intermediary roles and is one of the few countries that maintain close relations with both China and the US. To date, Singapore looks from the good ideas from Switzerland: So the city government is to establish itself as a hub for commodities trading.

However, there are a lot of things that did not stop Lee Kuan Yew for copy worthy. Although we took the idea of WKs, but otherwise, the importance of the military differs massively. Singapore has very high military spending - in 2013 it was one-fifth of government spending (the military spending in Switzerland amounted to 2.4 percent). Another example is the bureaucracy: There is nothing easier than to start a company in Singapore. The country occupies the top position in Doing Business Index of the World Bank, while Switzerland 2014 Rank 29 fell back. And finally: English. When the state was founded Lee Kuan Yew ruled that in school all have to learn English, so that understand the different ethnicities.

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