

Singapore — or: Tales from the Place where the Future is Now

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14/07/2019 Anja Hendel and Andy Grau were recently able to see for themselves how mobility changes in Singapore. On a four-day trip, everything revolved around innovation management in Southeast Asian markets and the question of how Singapore uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) & co for future mobilty.

600,000 cars are currently registered in Singapore — and there won't be a single one more. The Asian city state only approves new registrations if an old vehicle is decommissioned. What seems almost impossible in other parts of the world was decided by Singapore 20 years ago. In February 2018, the country has reduced the growth rate for registered cars and motorcycles from 0.25 percent per year to zero.

We, Anja Hendel and Andy Grau, were recently able to see for ourselves how this changes mobility in

the city. On our four-day trip, everything revolved around innovation management in Southeast Asian markets and the question of how Singapore uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) & co for future mobilty. We visited startups, various innovation labs and our colleagues from Porsche Asia Pacific, crowned by our participation in the innovation conference Innovfest Unbound.

Just to let you know upfront: The trip was absolutely impressive! We met many inspiring people and got to know impressive mobility solutions — Singapore really knows how to put innovation out on the street in the truest sense of the word.

Necessity is the mother of invention: piloting new mobility concepts in city states

The city state south of Malaysia is a Smart City from the picture book. This is mainly due to the government's clear vision in terms of innovation, efficiency and sustainability: by 2022 the country wants to become a smart nation. To this end, Singapore is working with 300 experts on a cloud-based platform that will network the entire city. The city state has already reached some important milestones along this path: for example, each building has a digital twin, a virtual 3D model.

For 15 years, Singapore has been using an intelligent toll system that calculates the toll for motorists based on road usage and the time of day — to curb private car use. At the same time, the government is promoting autonomous vehicles in local public transport. By 2022, self-propelled buses, taxis and trucks are to bring Singapore's inhabitants from A to B — as a matter of course, it seems.

Necessity really seems to be the mother of invention: city states have only a limited area at their disposal, and the population density is often high. This gives rise to certain problems that Singapore has been meeting with technological innovation for a long time — and very successfully. We can learn a lot from this for testing new, digital concepts — city states seem to be the ideal environment for piloting smart city and mobility solutions. Singapore shares the experience it has gained over the past 20 years with all interested parties, neighbors and experts at Innovfest Unbound to help other states build their own innovation ecosystems. Which place could be better suited for this?

"Hidden" Champions: the Startup Ecosystem of Southeast Asia

Of course, it is not the Singaporean government alone that is driving innovation, it has rather created almost perfect conditions for new ideas and concepts. Startups, innovation labs and companies have the opportunity to develop new concepts and test them comprehensively — for the mobility of the future and far beyond.

On our trip, we were able to get to know some of these projects. Sqreem's work was particularly impressive: The startup has built an AI platform that is able to grasp behaviour, context and logic in a

complexity that goes far beyond human capabilities. A machine that can acquire knowledge faster and better than anyone else.

At the Smart Nation Summit we had the pleasure to talk about Digital Transformation on a panel discussion together with Kevin Aluwi. He is co-founder of the mobility startup Go-Jek, which nobody knows in Germany and yet moves more than 50 cities in Southeast Asia. What is particularly fascinating about Go-Jek is that the company initially started out as a call center. Three years after its foundation, the team made a 180-degree turn and pivoted the entire business model into an on-demand transport and lifestyle service. This courageous decision changed the mobility in Southeast Asia lastingly and made Go-Jek the first startup in Indonesia with a business valuation of more than one billion US dollars — Indonesia's first unicorn!

Anja Hendel and Andy grau at the Smart Nation Summit

Neither Silicon Valley nor Shenzhen — the innovative strength of small markets

Far too long, our gaze has turned exclusively to the West, to Silicon Valley, in search of technological innovations and talent. And that is important, yes — you can follow the "why" in this blog post by Steffen Haug and Stephan Baral. But we've learned a lesson, and now we've got startup hotspots like Tel Aviv and certainly China's mega cities on the map. But this trip has shown us very clearly: it's also worth taking a look at smaller markets!

Singapore is our gateway to Asia and does not only combine the best of both worlds, but has created its very own ecosystem. It is enormously important to perceive the individual strengths of different cities, countries and, of course, people to identify the most promising technologies and concepts and to develop innovation in the Porsche Group together with strong partners.

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