

SWISS REVIEW

The magazine for the Swiss Abroad
September 2019



**Crowded on the summit:
mass tourism comes to Switzerland**

**Parties under the microscope:
the big “Review” election survey**

**Cryptocurrency payments:
Switzerland is driving the trend**



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Anyone visiting Switzerland this year cannot have failed to notice that the scrum around key tourist destinations has become thicker than ever. Lucerne, for example, is at its limits, groaning under the weight of tourist groups numbering in the thousands. Interlaken is also bursting at the seams. On some days, many of its local mountain railways are as packed as any metropolitan rush-hour underground.

As the Focus article in this edition of the “Review” shows, the impression is accurate. Switzerland is beginning to know the meaning of “overtourism”. In other words, beautiful towns and cities are learning how it feels for their role in history to be overlooked as they become nothing more than a backdrop to a hectic, parallel tourist world. One of the drivers of this is the sense of hurry. If the ever-growing groups of guests from the Far East are only able to afford “Europe in five days”, then they have at most 48 hours to enjoy Zurich, Lucerne, Bern, Interlaken, the Jungfrauoch and Geneva, not to mention any experience of everyday life here.

This pace is increasing the pressure on our tourism highlights. More and more guests are targeting the same places for the same experiences, and are taking the same photos. If you have not taken a selfie at the Rhine Falls, in front of Lucerne’s Kappellbrücke (Chapel Bridge), or up on the famous Jungfrauoch, you were not there. Experts refer to this type of behaviour as “signalling”.

This is by no means meant as a moral judgement as Swiss people experience the world in a similar way, too – whether it is the Eiffel Tower, the Taj Mahal, the Statue of Liberty, or Uluru, taking a photo in front of a well-known landmark gives a point of reference – and confirmation. Journeying the road less travelled is more challenging, as it is harder to share what fewer people know. Travelling without collecting visual trophies is something that has to be learned probably.

What’s more, a tourist destination like Switzerland has a huge amount to offer apart from just the hotspots. I tested this for myself, packed a rucksack, and went hiking for a few days through the alpine foothills, camped at farms and bathed my tired feet in beautiful rivers. There was no sign whatsoever of “overtourism”.

The last paragraph of this editorial is devoted to the coming elections. The “Fifth Switzerland” is being bombarded by advertising from all the political parties. At the same time, the political rights of the Swiss Abroad are coming under pressure. There could not be more at stake. We put the parties under the microscope, which produced some fascinating insights.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR IN CHIEF

Cover photo: Chinese tourists on the top of Titlis.
Photo: Keystone

“Swiss Review”, the information magazine for the “Fifth Switzerland”, is published by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA).



The federal elections 2019 are just around the corner



The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) summarises its main concerns in an electoral manifesto and presents the Swiss Abroad candidates of the various parties.

Discover now on
www.aso.ch/en/politics/federal-elections-2019.



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“Swiss Review” in general

We do like to read the “Swiss Review”. Our preference is the printed version. This publication is my main and regular reading material to learn what is going on in Switzerland, since I do not subscribe to any newspaper or other form of communication. The “Swiss Review”, in my opinion, is balanced but still critical on challenges facing the country. Also, to read about other US clubs’ activities is fun. I hope this publication will continue to be made available.

FRED LINDNER, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA, USA

E-voting encounters a headwind

In my view, e-voting is now the only way to vote. Yes, I live in Canada and the post gets delivered relatively quickly, but in what century are we actually living? In my opinion, this is not just an issue for Swiss who live abroad – surely the younger generation of voters in Switzerland matters too. Will they want to send in their votes by post or turn up to polling stations? I doubt it. My sincere hope is that Switzerland can preserve democracy and give everyone a fair chance to have their say.

CHRISTINE MEICHSSNER, VANCOUVER, CANADA

Further comments on e-voting at
www.ogy.de/no-e-voting

Swiss young people are fuelling the climate debate

What a very informative article. I am delighted that young people are taking such an interest in climate change. However, it is crucial that they don’t lose sight of their objectives. Perhaps then politicians might also start taking serious and concerted action and possibly adopt the legislation that we need.

ULRICH MENTZ, GERMANY



Taking part in climate strikes is mainly just an excuse not to go to school. They protest against climate change but they aren’t willing to give up anything themselves. How about if shops started closing again at normal times? And is there any need for bars and restaurants to stay open all night? We conveniently forget about climate change when it comes to making money. We

spray artificial snow on ski slopes to keep our winter resorts ticking over. And then we have overpopulation – what are we doing about it? The only thing our politicians do is invent new taxes.

RENATO BESOMI, JAVEA, SPAIN

Apollo 11 and the beautiful lunar toy from Berne



Congratulations on an exceptionally good and informative May issue. I particularly enjoyed the article about that sheet of foil – the University of Berne’s Solar Wind Collector. I remember being allowed to stay up and watch the moon landing on television as a little boy. However, I would have liked to have known what the solar sail helped to clear up with re-

gard to the Big Bang.

DAN PETER, GOMARINGEN, GERMANY

Editor’s response

The story of how the Bernese solar sail gave us a better understanding of the Big Bang is a slightly complicated one. By the mid-1960s, there were two theories on the evolution of the universe competing against each other. Alexander Friedmann, the Russian cosmologist, on the one hand, stipulated an expanding universe (1922) that had commenced with a “Big Bang” – a theory that even Albert Einstein himself cast doubt on. On the other hand, the steady-state theory of Fred Hoyle, Thomas Gold and Hermann Bondi (1948) stipulated an ever-expanding universe without a beginning. Mathematically, both theories were valid solutions of Einstein’s equations of general relativity, and both were compatible with Edwin Hubble’s observations of the expanding universe (1926).

Eventually, the discovery of cosmic background radiation put the steady-state theory to rest. However, no one had been able to clear up the origin of a number of isotopes. In particular, the prevalence of deuterium (or “heavy hydrogen”) remained a mystery. The Bernese solar sail solved this puzzle. It showed that deuterium occurs up to one tenth as much in the protosolar cloud than on earth or in meteorites, confirming the hypothesis that deuterium was produced exclusively in the Big Bang.

However, to complicate matters a little further, the solar wind samples that were collected from the moon did not contain any deuterium at all. When the protosolar cloud gave rise to the sun, all the deuterium was burned into Helium-3. The solar wind sail therefore measured the total prevalence of Helium-3. Using the same method that applies to meteorites or to Jupiter, you must deduct the original Helium-3 content from this measurement to calculate the prevalence of deuterium in the protosolar cloud.

Spatium, the English-language periodical of the International Space Science Institute (ISSI), contains further information about the “Deuterium puzzle”: www.ogy.de/deuterium (see page 15).



Tourists everywhere

Overtourism is not restricted to the famous Italian city of Venice – Swiss destinations such as Lucerne and Interlaken are no strangers to the phenomenon either. However, other Swiss localities are still struggling to attract visitors as hotels go out of business.

SUSANNE WENGER

Switzerland is an attractive holiday destination blessed with spectacular alpine panoramas and exceptional towns and cities. The country's hoteliers recorded 38.8 million overnight stays in 2018 – more visits than ever before. This record high shows that Swiss tourism is back on track after some difficult years. First the financial and economic crisis

broke out in 2008, then the currency shock compounded matters four years ago. Following the abandonment of the minimum Euro exchange rate by the Swiss National Bank and the subsequent appreciation of the Swiss franc, Switzerland had become too expensive for European guests in particular. Tourism leaders feared the worst. But visitor numbers are climbing again – so

strongly in some places that the locals are up in arms.

Lucerne – situated on the lake, with its mountain views and famous wooden footbridge – is particularly popular. Well over 20,000 guests visit the small city each day during the high season. Many are American, while a sizeable contingent are Asians travelling in tour groups. In May of this year, some 12,000 Chinese ar-



A quick stop in Lucerne: the city in central Switzerland is extremely popular with tour groups from China. This is not universally welcomed by the locals

Photo: Keystone

rived in Lucerne at virtually the same time. It was the biggest single group of holidaymakers that Switzerland had ever seen. According to a study by the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, such an influx has economic benefits. In 2017, organised sightseeing generated added value worth 224 million Swiss francs alone at the watch, jewellery and souvenir shops situated on Lucerne's central square where all the tourist buses stop. This is remarkable even by Swiss standards.

Response from local parliament

Revenues are buoyant, but traffic and overcrowding in the city centre have become a bane for residents who com-

plain that their local shops now only cater to tourists. Lucerne's politicians are on the case, with the city parliament having recently approved a motion from the Green Party that includes drastic measures such as controls over pricing and a limit on hotel beds. The city council must now draw up a report detailing how it sees tourism in 2030 – because visitor numbers will probably continue to rise. “Global growth in tourism is the main cause of mass tourism,” says the Lucerne-based tourism expert Jürg Stettler in an interview with “Swiss Review” (see page 8).

Situated not far from Lucerne is the popular Mount Rigi – another destination heaving under the weight of tourists. Last year, the Rigi Railways transported almost one million people up and down the mountain – again a new record. Mount Rigi is popular not only with the Swiss but also among tour groups from China and South Korea. The Rigi Railways want to expand, but this plan has met resistance. Thousands of people, including local celebrities such as cabaret artist Emil Steinberger, submitted a petition calling for an end to the “Disneyfication” of Mount Rigi (see also “Swiss Review” 4/2018). This effort paid off when local citizens, municipalities and tourism leaders recently signed the Rigi 2030 charter that commits to securing a sustainable future for the iconic mountain.

Generous spending

Interlaken in the Bernese Oberland has also seen significant tourism growth in recent years. First you have the Asians who like to take the scenic ride by cog railway to the 3,000-metre Jungfrauoch, a Unesco World Heritage site. Secondly, the popular destination between Lake Thun and Lake Brienz is a magnet for affluent visitors from the Gulf States who like to travel independently. Arab visitors cough up 420 francs on average each day, hotel

not included – whereas the Chinese contribute around 380 francs and the Swiss spend a relatively miserly 140 francs. Almost 90 per cent of Interlaken's workforce make a living from tourism. Hence little wonder that they are so accommodating to the lucrative Middle East market.

But a saturation effect is in evidence here as well, according to a study by the University of Berne. Fully veiled Arab women strolling through town have become a conspicuous addition to local life. Unlike Ticino, the canton of Berne has not banned women from wearing the niqab face veil in public.

Chinese tourists

Economic growth and relaxed travel regulations mean that increasing numbers of Chinese are travelling abroad. The effects of this are apparent in Switzerland, where Chinese tourists accounted for around 17,500 overnight stays in 2005 – and approximately 147,300 in 2018. Tourism experts expect this trend to continue, because only ten per cent of China's 1.4 billion population currently own a passport. (SWE)

However, the garment is still a bone of contention. The Interlaken tourist board tries to foster communication on both sides of the cultural divide to prevent misunderstanding. Tourism providers receive special training, while Arab guests unfamiliar with Swiss customs now have their own dedicated contact point as well as an information guide to explain things like the Swiss highway code – because visitors from the Middle East often drive around in hire cars.

“A sporadic phenomenon”

Thanks to the power of social media, even remote locations are no longer immune from international attention. Take Berggasthaus Aescher-Wild-

“They all want to visit the same beautiful places.”

The growing Asian market, the role of social media, and the behavioural patterns of tourists – these are the causes of mass tourism, according to Lucerne-based tourism expert Jürg Stettler.

“Swiss Review”: Does Switzerland suffer from overtourism, Jürg Stettler?

Jürg Stettler: Some destinations are experiencing similar visitor patterns to those seen in the oft-cited hotspots of Venice, Barcelona and Amsterdam, albeit not to the same extent. However, we lack an objective means of defining overtourism. Indicators such as the ratio of tourists to locals might help, but overtourism is a very subjective concept. It all depends on your point of view. On the one hand, locals will say that Lucerne or Interlaken are no longer the places they used to be. But then you have the people running the souvenir shops who will say something completely different.

Saturation, overcrowding, souvenir shops everywhere. These are the symptoms. Isn't that what overtourism essentially is?

They are all relevant, for sure. But even they are subjective. The same applies to the notion of “wall-to-wall tourists”. I was at a conference in Venice in the summer of last year. Venice in peak season? A nightmare, surely, if you believe what the media tell you. And it was indeed pretty crowded in certain places at specific times of the day. But what I didn't expect to find were deserted, tranquil spots just 100 metres away from the hustle and bustle.

Is overtourism a media exaggeration then?

No, but we tend to oversimplify the conversation instead of looking for facts. We lack the data to make a qualified judgement. I don't want to play down the issue, but we need to look at it from more than one angle.

What are the causes of mass tourism?

Global growth in tourism is the main cause. More and more people from big markets such as China and India can now afford to travel. And they all want to visit the same beautiful places. There is nothing unusual about this. We Swiss do exactly the same. But the issue here is the volume of tourists. Then we have social media. Whether it be snap-happy Instagrammers on the one hand or travel bloggers on the other telling us about their bucket lists – the end result is that even more people travel to the same destinations.

What is the most effective way to manage this phenomenon? Charge admission fees? Raise parking costs? Manage crowd flow? Restrict Airbnb?

Many measures simply don't work in historic cities, or their impact is limited. Essentially, tourist destinations need to have an idea of what type of tourism they want in future. All stakeholders need to be involved, so that everyone is pulling in the same direction at a later stage. Lucerne's director of

tourism may well want to promote high-quality tourism in the long term, but nothing much will change if the local mountain railway or watch company strikes advantageous bulk deals with Chinese tour operators. Making sure that everyone is reading from the same page is far from easy,



Jürg Stettler is professor at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, where he heads the Institute of Tourism

but I don't see any alternative. Otherwise, tourists will feel the backlash sooner or later – from the local population or from politicians. And we will then have to resort to hard measures, such as banning Airbnb.

Which destination off the beaten track would you recommend to Swiss Abroad who wish to have a holiday in Switzerland?

Any place that you can only reach by foot or by bike is very likely to be a hidden gem at certain times of the day. If I were to give you one name, it would be Fräkmüntegg on Mount Pilatus – situated on the cantonal border between Lucerne and Nidwalden. Get up there before sunset to enjoy the tranquility and the view. But please don't post anything on Instagram!

kirchli in the canton of Appenzell-Innerrhoden for example, which has been photographed by Instagram tourists from around the world. The most recent managers of this tiny guest house hung up their tea towels after the crowds got too much for them. Stories such as this have led to the term “overtourism” being increasingly used in public discourse about

the negative impact of mass tourism in Switzerland. The Swiss Tourism Federation, which represents the interests of the sector, even published a position paper on overtourism not so long ago. However, federation spokesman Robert Zenhäusern is at pains to play down the report. “It's a sporadic phenomenon in Switzerland, confined to a small number of hotspots.”

Zenhäusern says that tourists are unequally distributed across the country. Mountain communities in Valais and Grisons are off the traditional tourist trail and do not attract enough guests. Demand among Europeans is still not what it used to be. This is a situation that Zenhäusern wants to change, because the flip side of overtourism is only too real



in certain parts of Switzerland. According to hotelleriesuisse, the Swiss hotel association, around 100 Swiss hotels go out of business each year. Drastically shrinking margins seem to be the main problem. There are also not enough investors willing to give some localities the facelift they need. Whenever a mountain region loses a hotel or a railway line, this can have a significant economic knock-on effect. Politicians are calling for greater public funding. How-

ever, tourism experts believe that Switzerland also needs to ready itself for the growing influx of travelers from around the world. The tourist sector is trying to manage the inundation more effectively in order to reduce visitor bottlenecks and avoid eroding goodwill among local communities. Measures also include selling autumn as a separate season instead of advertising Switzerland solely as a winter and summer destination.

Global fame through Instagram: the small Berggasthaus Aescher in the Appenzel Alps

Photo: Keystone



The closed spa house at Schwefelbergbad shows the downside of the boom: 100 hotels are closing every year in the peripheral regions.

Photo: Danielle Liniger

The “Fifth Switzerland” – they love to travel

Not everyone who visits Switzerland is looking for a new experience. Many are going back to their roots, or to put it another way – going home. Tens of thousands of Swiss Abroad who visit Switzerland are renewing ties with their homeland. There are no precise figures as tourist statistics include visitors’ country of origin but have no information about their connection to Switzerland.

However, a survey by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) covering 35,000 people does provide some valuable indicators: 68 per cent of respondents said they visit Switzerland at least once a year. Just under a third said they visit Switzerland at least three times a year, with ten per cent travelling there five times or more per year. An extrapolation of these findings to the 760,000 Swiss Abroad suggests that they form a significant visitor group.

Holidaymakers from the “Fifth Switzerland” are major contributors to the tourism industry. While foreign tourists spend fewer than three nights in Switzerland on average (2017: 2.1 nights), Swiss expatriates like to take their time. The resounding majority stay for eight or more days and one quarter spend more than two weeks in the country. They also like the traditional souvenirs: chocolate, cheese, wine and watches in particular. Their influence on the hotel sector is less pronounced, as most Swiss Abroad prefer to stay with friends or relatives.

The survey also emphatically shows that Swiss Abroad believe the best way to strengthen their connection to Switzerland is to keep going there regularly. Their second most important link is incidentally the “Swiss Review”. Number three is the opportunity for political participation, although the survey was conducted before electronic voting was called into question.

MARC LETTAU

Playing for time

The Federal Council will only sign the Swiss-EU framework agreement once a number of contentious points have been resolved. This could still take quite a while. The new European Commission is unlikely to show any greater flexibility in its dealings with Berne. So far, the Swiss tactic of playing for time has done little harm.

THEODORA PETER



President of the Swiss Confederation Ueli Maurer has no option but to defend a framework agreement that his own party, the SVP, has called into serious question.



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is unlikely to give Switzerland much wiggle room, because Brexit has forced the EU to act tough towards non-EU countries.

The draft institutional framework agreement designed to govern the future bilateral relationship between Switzerland and the European Union (EU) has been on the table for nine months. Although this treaty with Switzerland's biggest-trading partner is of tremendous importance, the Federal Council remained tight-lipped for a long time – only deciding to open up just before the summer recess after months of consultation involving the country's main stakeholders. It explained in June that Switzerland could not accept the draft in its present form, and that further clarifications were necessary. The Federal Council consciously avoided mentioning the word “renegotiation” in its letter to EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, given that the EU is categorically ruling out further talks.

Specifically, the Federal Council wants clarification on three aspects of the text which it believes will not gain majority support as the text stands because of internal political opposition: wage protection, state subsidies, and the Citizens' Rights Directive (“Swiss Review” 2/2019). The first of these points concerns the Federal Council's wish to safeguard Swiss wage levels. With regard to state subsidies, the government wants to ensure that Switzerland only has to apply relevant EU guidelines when access to the EU single market has been contractually agreed. Thirdly, the Federal Council wishes to clarify that no provision of the framework agreement will be in-

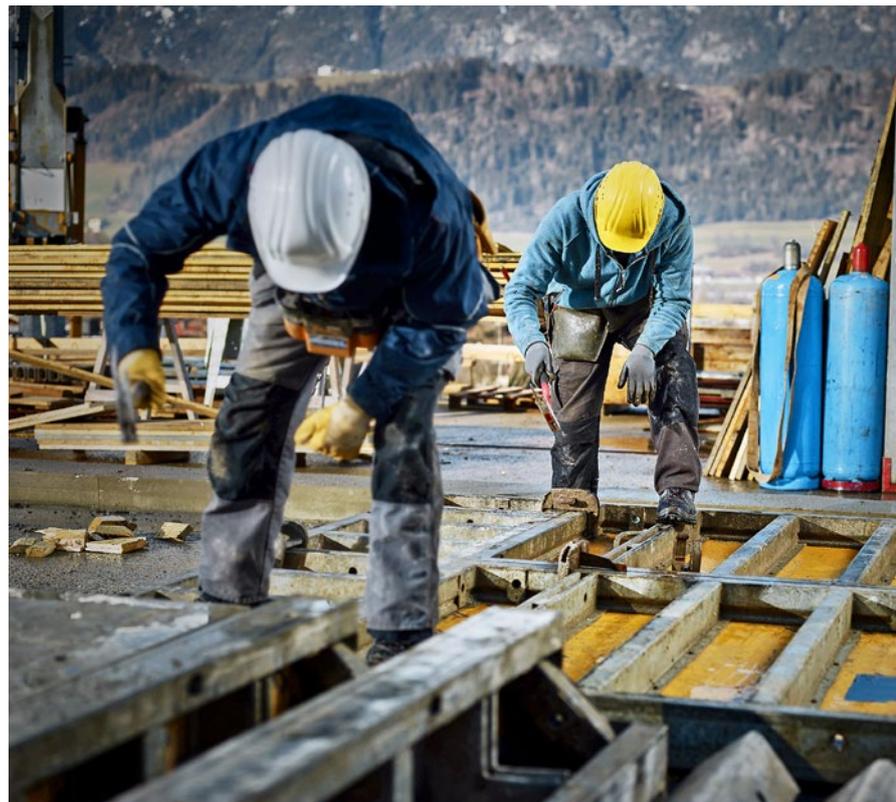
terpreted as an obligation for Switzerland to adopt the Citizens' Rights Directive, which defines the reciprocal right to free movement within the EU and extends to other areas such as entitlement to welfare benefits.

Ratification unlikely before Juncker's departure

The question is whether “clarifications” are actually enough to resolve these issues, or whether new talks are needed. The present European Commission, responsible under Jean-Claude Juncker for negotiating the framework deal with Switzerland, steps down at the end of October, so the clock is ticking either way. Presi-

dent of the Swiss Confederation Ueli Maurer (Swiss People's Party, SVP) said at the beginning of August that he did not expect a solution to be found by the end of Juncker's term in office. However, talks are unlikely to get any easier under the new European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Maurer nevertheless believes that Switzerland has time on its side. “And we need time for a solution that serves Switzerland's interests,” he added. His party, the SVP, wants to abandon free movement completely, having launched an initiative calling for “moderate immigration” – which the National Council is set to debate during its autumn session.

At the time of going to press, there was still no Swiss consensus on wage



protection. The Federal Council had called on the unions and employers to spend the summer working out what proposals they can put to the EU. But the union boss Pierre-Yves Maillard has already indicated his unwillingness to budge. Maillard is also playing for time and wants Brussels to cede ground on wage protection, suggesting that Switzerland increase its financial contributions in return – as exemplified by past cohesion payments to support EU enlargement in Eastern Europe (the “eastern billion”).

One possible scenario is that the SVP’s limitation initiative is put to the people in 2020 before the framework deal is signed. The electorate voting against an end to free movement would not only be a de facto endorsement of Switzerland’s bilateral approach, but would also strengthen the Federal Council’s position.

So far, the tactic of playing for time on the institutional framework agreement has not done Switzerland much harm. The EU decided not to re-

new the Swiss stock exchange’s “equivalence” status on 1 July, but measures taken by the Federal Council to protect securities trading on the Swiss stock market seem to have worked.

Brexit limits wiggle room

However, more concerning for the economy is the prospect of existing bilateral agreements being eroded. Unless progress is made on the framework deal, the EU will not necessarily feel inclined to update existing treaties. For instance, the bilateral agreement on technical barriers to trade (MRA) has to be adapted by May 2020 – otherwise Swiss medtech companies could lose direct access to the EU single market. Essentially, the bureaucratic hurdles would be higher and the costs greater. There is a lot at stake for the economy, given that Switzerland earns one in three francs from trade with the EU. The bilateral treaties account for trade in goods worth one billion francs each day. Free access to the European market is therefore vital to the Swiss economy.

The spectre of Brexit is anything but helpful to Switzerland. Faced with the UK leaving the EU, Brussels is doing all it can to make non-membership of the bloc as unattractive as possible. That is the message being given to Switzerland, whom the EU accuses of cherry-picking. Some observers believe that Brussels would have given Berne more flexibility were it not for the need to appear tough on Brexit.

This article reflects the information available at the time of going to press at the beginning of August. Previous article on this issue: www.ogy.de/CH-EU

Switzerland in figures

21,000

Switzerland’s care homes and hospitals increasingly need more personnel. In 2018, 2,900 men and women completed training in this field. An additional 2,700 nursing professionals arrived from abroad. The number of foreign care workers has increased by 21,000 in the last ten years.

300,000

Some 300,000 new cars were registered in Switzerland last year. Compared to the previous year, new cars in 2018 were less environmentally friendly, accounting for 3.6 per cent higher fuel consumption and increased CO₂ emissions (2017: 134 g/km, 2018: 138 g/km).

670,000

According to the federal government’s Swiss social statistics report, the number of people experiencing poverty in Switzerland rose from 615,000 to around 675,000 between 2014 and 2017. Single mothers, children, and the long-term unemployed are particularly affected.

1,957

Swiss bobsleigh duo Beat Hefti and Alexander Baumann received their Olympic gold medals 1,957 days late. They returned from Sochi (2014) with silver, but the winning Russian crew were eventually disqualified for doping.

5,000

On 26 June 2019, the 0°C threshold in Switzerland began at an altitude of over 5,000 metres above sea level, with many high-elevation localities experiencing record high temperatures, e.g. Davos (29.8°C), the Fuorn Pass (28.1°C), and Säntis (21.0°C).

SUMMARY: MUL



Safeguarding Swiss wage levels is one of the Federal Council’s main objectives.

Photo: Keystone



Peter Fischli und David Weiss
Moonraker (from: Sausage Series), 1979
Colour photography, 50.5 cm x 72.5 cm



Judith Albert
Kein Wasser – kein Mond
(No water – no moon), 2004
Video projection, DVD, colour,
sound, 4:30 min.



Balthasar Anton Dunker
Moonlight scene, Zwei Männer auf einem Felsen
(Two men on a cliff), 1794
Watercolour, 14.7 cm x 11.7 cm



Franz Niklaus König
Die Stadt Bern im Mondlicht (The City of Berne
in the moonlight), from the vantage point
of the Muristalden, in 1810
Watercolour on transparent paper, 84 cm x 119 cm



Claude Sandoz

Mister Sun and Missis Moon, sun cover, 1973

Mixing gouache and glimmer
on fabric and paper, 99 cm x 89 cm

More than just a disc in the night sky

The footprints were pristine. Not a single cloud obscured the bare, barren, rugged lunar horizon. When man first stepped on the moon 50 years ago, what viewers on Earth essentially saw was a massive, inert lump of rock in space. Yet, one giant leap did not ultimately change the way we view the moon. For centuries, our closest satellite has offered us a vaguely luminous yet inscrutable, sombre nocturnal reflection of the human condition – as it still does today. This disc in the night sky also conveys something miraculous, enigmatic and feminine. The Clair de lune exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Berne (Kunstmuseum Bern) shows how much humans have projected their aspirations onto the moon and how much the moon has fired our artistic imagination. Meticulously curated by Marianne Wackernagel, it features exhibits from the museum's Collection of Prints and Drawings, with works dating from the 16th century to the present day.

(MUL)

Clair de lune, Kunstmuseum Bern, until 20 October 2019.

www.kunstmuseumbern.ch



Meret Oppenheim

Mondspiegelung in den Lagunen

Reflection of the Moon in the Lagoons, 1977

Oil chalk on grey paper



Markus Raetz

Reflexion II, 1991

Heliogravure on vellum paper, 48.4 cm x 65.6 cm

The Léman Express will open Geneva up to its surroundings

From 15 December, the Geneva region will be home to a high-speed rail network. Linking Geneva to Swiss and French towns and looking to generate a 12 % reduction in motorised traffic, the Léman Express will be nothing short of a revolution.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

Geneva is an international city, which generates a large number of jobs but remains intrinsically closed off, paying little attention to its surrounding French and Vaudois hinterland. This inward-looking attitude peaked in 2014 when, encouraged by the populist MCG (Geneva citizens' movement), the people of Geneva refused to participate in financing carparks located in the French outskirts. This, despite the new areas being intended to relieve the city of some of its motorised traffic. Records currently indicate that 630,000 vehicles cross the border each day.

tral stations, Lancy Pont Rouge and Eaux-Vives, each accompanied by a new neighbourhood complete with companies and public infrastructure. Three new stops will be introduced to the service.

The space saved must be protected

The aim of this huge operation, the cost of which amounts to 1.6 billion Swiss francs, is to reduce motorised traffic in the centre of a city where 42 % of inhabitants already do not own a car. The entry into service of the Léman Express should lead to a substantial 12 % reduction in traffic. Indeed,



A Léman Express train arriving at the new Lancy Pont-Rouge station. This is one of the three new stops in Geneva for this RER. Photo: Keystone

The entry into service of the Léman Express, planned for 15 December, will put an end to the city's split personality. With its Regional Express Network (Réseau Express Régional or RER in French), Geneva will be connected to the rest of the one-million-person agglomeration. The city's inhabitants will be able to go shopping in neighbouring France in just 15 minutes. Frontier workers living in Haute-Savoie in France will be granted direct access to the city centre by taking the train from Annecy, Thonon or Saint-Gervais. The city will see the arrival of two new cen-

the 7 % decrease in traffic recorded each summer in Geneva already noticeably frees up the public space. But Geneva will have to accompany this movement with traffic restriction measures to prevent the newfound "emptiness" and improved traffic flow from being refilled by new vehicles, "as occurred following the launch of the RER in Zurich", recalls Vincent Kaufmann, professor in mobility analysis at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL). The canton will also have to meet inhabitants' requests regarding pedestrian zones and "gentle mobility".

Will authorities dare to restrict access to the city for cars? A new mobility law certainly looks to prioritise public transport in the city centre and in secondary urban centres. The text represents something of a compromise for Geneva, as the principle of complementarity between public and private transport is inscribed in its constitution. The canton is also under an obligation to offset any reductions in the quantity of parking space available. This system has provoked chaos in the city's central areas, such as Cornavin and Place Bel Air.

Convincing commuters to leave their cars at home

Indeed, the struggle regarding car parking is another of the canton's hot topics. At present, only 40–50 % of motorists actually pay for their parking space: certain commuters prefer to park illegally, with the risk of a 40 franc fine considered “cheap”. But the city is promising to clamp down on this. Free parking spaces for companies are also in its sights. These spaces could be converted into a source of revenue, for example, and made subject to taxing measures. In a city devoid of pedestrian zones, the arrival of the Léman Express should be accompanied by “several communal projects aiming to pedestrianise the streets and squares in the city centre, or to at least give pedestrians the priority”, says Yann Gerdil-Margueron, head of information and communication at the Cantonal transport office.

“It is a golden opportunity, because with a 15 % reduction in inner-city traffic, these developments will be painless,” reflects Vincent Kaufmann. For this mobility specialist, the political and social context is favourable to change. “The CVP has repositioned itself on these matters and this alters the political balance. And we mustn't forget the Green Wave and climate concerns.” Historically, the question of mobility has always greatly divided left-wing and right-wing politics.

Geneva chooses cars over trains

Geneva is emerging from a long period of confinement. Prior to 1914, the region boasted a rail network stretching 125 km between Switzerland and France. “It took a century to complete the CEVA rail project (Editor's note: the train line linking Annemasse to Geneva), notably because of the two wars which led to the borders being closed off. After 1945, Geneva opted for cars,” explains Christian Democrat Guy Mettan. This former journalist rallied for the creation of the missing link between the two countries, provided for in an agreement signed in 1912. “It has been a long wait, but the project has been fulfilled relatively quickly, given its immense size,” comments the former president of Alprail, an association which supported the CEVA rail project.



A train every 10 minutes and 45 stations

The Léman Express will cover 230 kilometres and will provide services to 45 stations in France and Switzerland. It will operate with 40 trains. During the week, one train will leave every 10 minutes in both directions. Boasting six lines, this RER network expects 50,000 passengers per day and will link the key areas of the city and the canton: Cornavin train station, Cointrin airport and the cantonal hospital. It will also connect the two banks of the city. Travel outside the region will be possible on the network thanks to Regio Express trains: passengers will be able to reach Lausanne and Martigny from Eaux-Vives or Pont-Rouge, for example. (SH)

Those who have visited the tunnels and the stations under construction have expressed surprise at the scale of the work. “The Lancy Pont-Rouge and Eaux-Vives stations have 320-metre-long platforms and a double track system. The stations are enormous. It's just huge!” exclaims Kaufmann.

Weaknesses on the French side

“With no real territory, scaling up presented a psychological issue for the city canton. The RER will enable us to step out of the cantonal borders,” states Mettan. However, mobility specialists highlight weaknesses, which could derail the system. The Léman Express will be maintained by both Swiss and French mechanics on both Swiss and French trains, from Stadler and Alstom respectively. This combination of styles could prove problematic. Delays in the implementation of French park and ride systems could also curb commuters' reliance on the train. Furthermore, the SNCF rail network is purportedly rundown and poorly adapted to the RER system. “There are parts with no double tracks and where switches are operated manually. If something were to go wrong, it could lead to delays across the whole network,” explains mobility specialist Kaufmann, citing the Basel RER as an unsuccessful example in which passengers must change trains to cross from one country to another.

The Klettgau Russian

Swiss author Albert Bächtold lived in Russia during the 1917 Revolution – then chose to recount this experience in his local dialect.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

Every job could have been filled twice – so oversubscribed was the teaching profession when 22-year-old Albert Bächtold gave up his own job as a primary school teacher in 1913. After two years at a school in Merishausen, Bächtold accepted an invitation from a Swiss expatriate to work as private tutor for the noble estate of Baranovi-chi near Kyiv. During his stay, he would live through the most dramatic period in modern Russian history: the fall of the Tsar, the failure of the Kerensky republic, the return of Lenin, and the subsequent revolution. Far from motivating him to keep the red flag flying, this experience turned him into an opponent of all things Marxist and communist. After returning to Switzerland in October 1918 on a train laid on by Lenin for him and other Swiss expatriates, Bächtold began fighting for the interests of Russian exiles. He eventually travelled to the United States to raise money for them – giving speeches, visiting the notorious Sing Sing prison, and having a chance encounter with a business that sold portable cinema projectors. Fascinated by these self-styled “pocket cinemas”, Bächtold promptly began working as the firm’s Swiss representative. He quickly earned a fortune, drove the most expensive car around, and married his second wife – the most beautiful of all the models from the Zurich fashion house Grieder. Bächtold was living the dream – until the Great Depression arrived in 1929. Suddenly alone and with no money left, he tried to make ends meet working as a journalist.

Inspired by Norwegian author Knut Hamsun, he also began writing novels, the first of which was “Der grosse Tag”. One evening, he read out an excerpt at Rudolf Jakob Humm’s literary circle, where the reaction was muted, to put it mildly. However, the scholars took such a liking to how he had rendered one of the chapters in his lo-

cal Klettgau dialect, they suggested he write in the vernacular instead.

“De Tischelfink”, his first-ever book written in dialect, was a homage to his prematurely deceased father. For years, Bächtold was unable to get it printed, until his luck changed in 1939. Ironically, it was the left-leaning publishing house, Büchergilde Gutenberg, that saved the day, keen to champion local cultural heritage at a time when “geistige Landesverteidigung”, the intellectual defence of the nation, was of significant importance. Further autobiographical works in dialect followed – “De Hannili Peter” (childhood), “Wält uhni Liecht” (when the doctors operated on his eye), “De Studänt Räbme” (at school in Schaffhausen) and “De ander Wäg” (the Zurich years and his decision to begin writing in dialect). Yet Bächtold surpassed all this in 1950 when he recounted the story of his Russian adventures from 1913 to 1918 in a novel entitled “Pjotr Ivanowitsch” (Pyotr Ivanovich). This extensive two-volume work contains autobiographical elements, but also includes a breathless if completely fictitious love story. Nonetheless, “Pjotr Ivanowitsch” is remarkable for its authentic portrayal of the Russian countryside and Russian society – and for the fact that Bächtold goes as far as lending new words, sentence constructions and forms of dialogue to his dialect in order to mimic the Russian language. Some of the characters even have foreign accents or speech impediments that are easy to make out above their otherwise impeccable Klettgau dialect.

No nostalgia for America

“De Silberstaab”, published in 1953, covers Bächtold’s time in the USA, but it lacks the intensity and warmth of “Pjotr Ivanowitsch” – no wonder, given how starkly the author compared America with Russia: “America is remarkable but forgettable. I can take or leave it. Russia is the country I fell in love with. And you never forget something you love.”

By the time he died in 1981 at the age of 90, Albert Bächtold had produced a total of 14 books in Klettgau dialect – all of which can still be ordered from the Schaffhausen-based Meier Buchverlag publishing house, despite the fact that hardly anyone outside Bächtold’s home canton has heard of them. Apparently, a sizeable property in Meilen that Bächtold had owned came to light after the author’s death. It could only be sold on condition that all Bächtold’s works continue to be reprinted and published for 500 years.



“One of our most valuable cultural assets, ladies and gentlemen, is dying a slow death before our very eyes – and no one seems bothered. We all appear to have time, money and energy for everything apart from our own mother tongue.”

(Translated excerpt from Bächtold’s speech on receiving the Lake Constance Literature Prize in 1966)

State of the nation

The forthcoming federal elections are developing into a contest to woo the voters of the “Fifth Switzerland”. However, domestic issues are clearly dominating this year’s campaign.

MARC LETTAU

In the run-up to elections, the hopes and concerns of the electorate increasingly become the focus of political debate. The federal elections of 20 October 2019 are no exception. GFS Bern’s Worry Barometer is a popular gauge for assessing the nation’s mood. According to the research and polling institute’s latest findings, for Swiss voters domestic issues are currently the most pressing.

For a number of years, the greatest concern among survey respondents was the threat of unemployment. Now the biggest source of worry is pension provision. Some 45 per cent of people (previous year: 44 per cent) think that the uncertain financial future of Old-Age and Survivors’ Insurance and the controversy surrounding proposals to raise the retirement age are a matter of concern. As their second concern, 41 per cent cite the ever-increasing cost of Swiss healthcare along with expensive health insurance premiums that

are putting a strain on household budgets. In comparison, only 26 per cent mentioned healthcare as one of their main concerns in the previous year. The issue of immigration and refugees also remains high on the list. Overall, GFS Bern have discerned a “shift in attention towards the domestic agenda”. In keeping with this, climate change and environmental protection rose to become one of the top five voter concerns following the 2018 heatwave.

Although the contest to woo the “Fifth Switzerland” is intense, the domestic emphasis has put the interests of the Swiss Abroad slightly into the shade. For example, e-voting has more or less been put on ice. In our big election survey (see the following pages), six out of seven political parties take a positive view of this innovation, at least with regard to voters who live abroad. There is indeed plenty of goodwill, but domestically the idea is a non-starter at the moment.

Nevertheless, notable efforts are being made to give the Swiss Abroad a stronger political voice. Parties – the SP and SVP in particular – have Swiss expatriates standing for election in a number of cantons. Politics is also about people, so a large number of foreign-based election candidates would do the interests of the “Fifth Switzerland” no harm at all. This, for the

How to vote smart

Whom do I vote for if I don’t know any of the election candidates? This is a common quandary even for many voters who live in Switzerland, let alone in faraway countries. Smartvote is an online platform that enables you to learn more about the political views of the people who are standing. Election candidates use the tool to answer questions on a range of issues, thus creating a database of profiles. The trick is that Smartvote also allows you, the voter, to answer the same questions. You can then compare your own political views directly with those of the different candidates. The more a candidate’s responses tally with your own responses, the more likely their political stance will be similar to yours. www.smartvote.ch

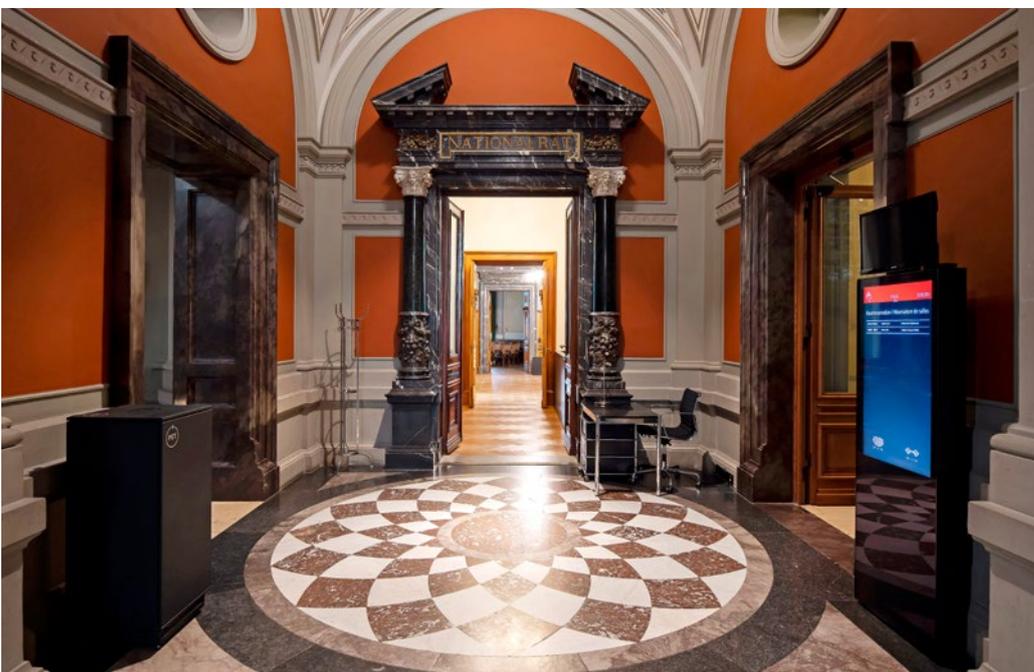
Swiss Abroad at least, is the good news as we approach the 2019 elections.

For more information on election candidates from the “Fifth Switzerland”, visit www.revue.ch



ELECTIONS
2019

The parliament lobby, now empty: election day will reveal who will soon be filling the space.
Photo: Keystone



The big election survey

“Swiss Review” asked the country’s seven most popular political parties to give clear and concise answers to some fundamental questions. We have printed their answers here as a guide to all those who wish to vote in the federal elections on 20 October.



Conservative Democratic Party (BDP)
 centrist party founded in 2008 as a splinter group from the SVP. 2015 election: 4.1%. Current political weight: 7 seats in National Council, 1 seat in Council of States. www.bdp.info



Christian Democrat People's Party (CVP)
 centrist party with conservative/Catholic roots. 2015 election: 11.6%. Current political weight: 26 seats in National Council, 14 seats in Council of States, 1 seat in Federal Council. www.cvp.ch



Formerly Free Democratic Party (FDP)
 merged with the Liberal Party (2009) to establish FDP. The Liberals. 2015 election: 16.4%. Current political weight: 33 seats in National Council, 12 seats in Council of States, 2 seats in Federal Council. www.fdp.ch



Green Liberal Party (GLP)
 centrist party founded in 2007 as a splinter group of the right wing of the Greens. 2015 election: 4.6%. Current political weight: 8 seats in National Council. www.grunliberale.ch



Green Party (GPS)
 Left-wing party whose roots go back to the anti-nuclear movement as well as civil society groups. 2015 election: 7.1%. Current political weight: 11 seats in National Council, 1 seat in Council of States. www.gruene.ch



Swiss People's Party (SVP)
 right-wing national-conservative party; strongest party since 2003. 2015 election: 29.4%. Current political weight: 64 seats in National Council, 5 seats in Council of States, 2 seats in Federal Council. www.svp.ch



Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP)
 only left-wing party in government; roots go back to labour movement. 2015 election: 18.8%. Current political weight: 42 seats in National Council, 12 seats in Council of States, 2 seats in Federal Council. www.sp-ps.ch

Demographic change is affecting social welfare funding. Should the current Swiss retirement age (64 for women, 65 for men) be increased?

YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO
Not only must the retirement age increase, it must also be tied to life expectancy. That is the only way to ensure future generations will also be able to receive a pension.	Firstly, men and women need to have the same retirement age of 65. In view of demographic change, genuine measures need to be discussed over the long term.	Demographic change gives us no choice but to increase the retirement age and take a more flexible approach to retirement.	Women face a considerable pension deficit due to lower wages and unpaid care leave. Unless we offset this deficit, increasing the retirement age is unfair.	Demographic change gives us no choice but to increase the retirement age and take a more flexible approach to retirement.	Demographic change gives us no choice but to increase the retirement age and take a more flexible approach to retirement.

Swiss healthcare costs and health insurance premiums continue to rise each year. What are the three most important ways to counter this trend?

- > Strengthen patient autonomy, either through integrated forms of healthcare or through a deliberate increase in the excess and the co-insurance amount.
- > Take action to cut healthcare costs – the CVP is petitioning for a referendum on this matter to prevent premium increases from stripping wage growth. Prevention
- > There is no single panacea. Instead, all stakeholders must work together to address the problem. A whole body of measures is necessary. For example, patients want to
- > Our priority is to strengthen primary care while improving prevention and coordination, e.g. through public health insurance. We must focus more on
- > We all need to take greater responsibility ourselves. For example, outpatient visits to GPs or hospitals should incur a symbolic excess fee for every new case, according to demand.
- > Manage outpatient admissions more effectively – the cantons need to be able to determine which new GP practices are to be opened according to demand.
- > The situation for older workers on the job market is alarming, with long-term unemployment and the proportion of welfare recipients both increasing. Age discrimination is a real problem..



Switzerland's relationship with the EU is of crucial importance for Swiss who live in EU countries. Is limiting immigration more important than maintaining Switzerland's bilateral agreements with the EU?

<p>The BDP is against Switzerland joining the EU. However, this does nothing to alter the fact that Switzerland has close economic and social ties with the EU's member states. The bilateral approach that we have taken is good for our country – and has been approved by voters more than once. Some of the treaties are good and some have been criticised. Others need revising. Nevertheless, it would be extremely dangerous to think that an unnecessary initiative to limit immigration would neither jeopardise this proven partnership with the EU nor compromise our prosperity.</p>	<p>No other partner has contributed as much to prosperity in Switzerland as the EU. The EU also benefits greatly from Switzerland. We want a relationship with the EU that hurts neither Switzerland nor the EU. The bilateral agreements are non-negotiable in our view. Switzerland's voters have already approved them more than once. From enjoying freedom of movement in Europe, to selling our good and services freely across the EU and sharing knowledge – the arrangement benefits us every day. The CVP has always advocated the bilateral path and blocked isolationist attacks. We consequently reject the SVP's "termination" initiative aimed at torpedoing free movement. An end to free movement would have grave consequences for the economy, for research and for jobs in Switzerland. It would negate all other market-opening agreements (including our research agreement) with the EU.</p>	<p>Not only do we want to keep the bilateral agreements, we also wish to continue improving them. From the outset, the GLP has been the only party committed to a framework agreement.</p>	<p>Switzerland is part of Europe. As the pro-European party, we are committed to Switzerland having good relations with our neighbours from the EU. The bilateral agreements benefit the citizens of both Switzerland and the EU. We want this partnership to be strengthened, particularly with regard to education, research and environmental protection. However, good neighbours also play by the rules. A framework agreement with the EU is essential to further development of the bilateral agreements. A pro-European stance will never command majority backing in a popular vote if the accompanying measures on free movement are undermined. To ensure that the EU gives us better protection against wage dumping, Switzerland finally needs to make progress on providing administrative assistance in relation to tax and taking action against tax dumping.</p>	<p>Freedom of movement – the privilege of being able to live and work anywhere in Europe – is a wonderful thing and must be defended at all costs. European integration is the foundation of peace and prosperity on our continent, of which Switzerland is part. However, free movement should not be about companies recruiting as many people from abroad as possible. Instead, we must combat the shortage of skilled workers through massive investments in education. The pool of suitable employees will also increase if we make it easier for people to reconcile family and career as well as ensure that men and women finally receive equal pay. We must enhance labour market integration through additional measures to educate migrants and through extra protection for the over-50s. All of this is necessary to counter the inclination among companies to look exclusively abroad for talent.</p>	
<p>NO</p> <p>We are already engaged in combating overdevelopment. In 2013, voters approved the revised Spatial Planning Act that is now being implemented at cantonal and municipal level.</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>We must make better use of existing built-up areas and be proportionate in our choice of building zones. The Spatial Planning Act effectively combats overdevelopment and encourages inward development.</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>The GLP is in favour of reforms.</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Construction activity outside building zones is eating up the valuable cropland and semi-natural habitats that help to preserve biodiversity.</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>The people decisively rejected stricter regulations by voting "No" to the Urban Sprawl Initiative. To protect our countryside more effectively, we need to curb excessive immigration.</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>Building stock outside building zones should not be allowed to increase. We should only authorise new builds that are needed for agricultural, and restrict the available options for converting properties.</p>

Overdevelopment is changing the face of Switzerland. Should more be done to protect the countryside, e.g. through stricter building regulations outside existing building zones?

The competition for a universal blockchain is raging in Switzerland

A blockchain is a decentralised encryption system which offers revolutionary exchange possibilities via the internet. Switzerland welcomes this technology: there is fierce competition between several blockchains and their cryptocurrencies.

STEPHANE HERZOG

The internet has seen several revolutions, not least the 1989 invention of the Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) which enabled the creation of a worldwide system: the web. Today, it is the decentralised encryption system termed 'blockchain' that is marking the beginning of a new era. "You could compare it to the invention of mathematics after the invention of writing," says Shaban Shaame from Geneva. Shaame, a 38-year-old entrepreneur, created his own blockchain for use in developing video game activities.

A blockchain is a ledger shared between several computer devices. Any modifications made to this 'genome' must be validated by all of its participants. It is for this reason that it is considered impossible to violate the system. This technology enables web users to exchange information, goods and services instantaneously, without involving any intermediary authority. Contracts are inscribed on the blockchain using 'tokens' and operations are settled using digital currency, produced by the blockchain. "This system will enable Uber to be bypassed," explains technology and finance specialist, Vincent Pignon. Indeed, a blockchain effectively connects the customer and the driver directly, without the need to access a commercial application. Pignon is the head of Geneva-based company Wecan, dedicated to blockchain. He is also employed by the city-state of Geneva to support the

canton in promoting this new technology.

In reality, there is not just one blockchain in the world, but thousands. Their owners, the Ethereum foundation for example, are in competition with each other to make their protocol the most widely used. It is in this context that Switzerland appears to have become an El Dorado of companies and foundations operating in the sector. In 2018, Federal Councillor and Economics Minister Johann Schneider-Ammann made public his ambition to make Switzerland a 'blockchain nation'. In contrast to the United States, where strict rules have been established in this area, Switzerland has decided not to create any specific legislation.

Zug invites citizens to pay in bitcoins

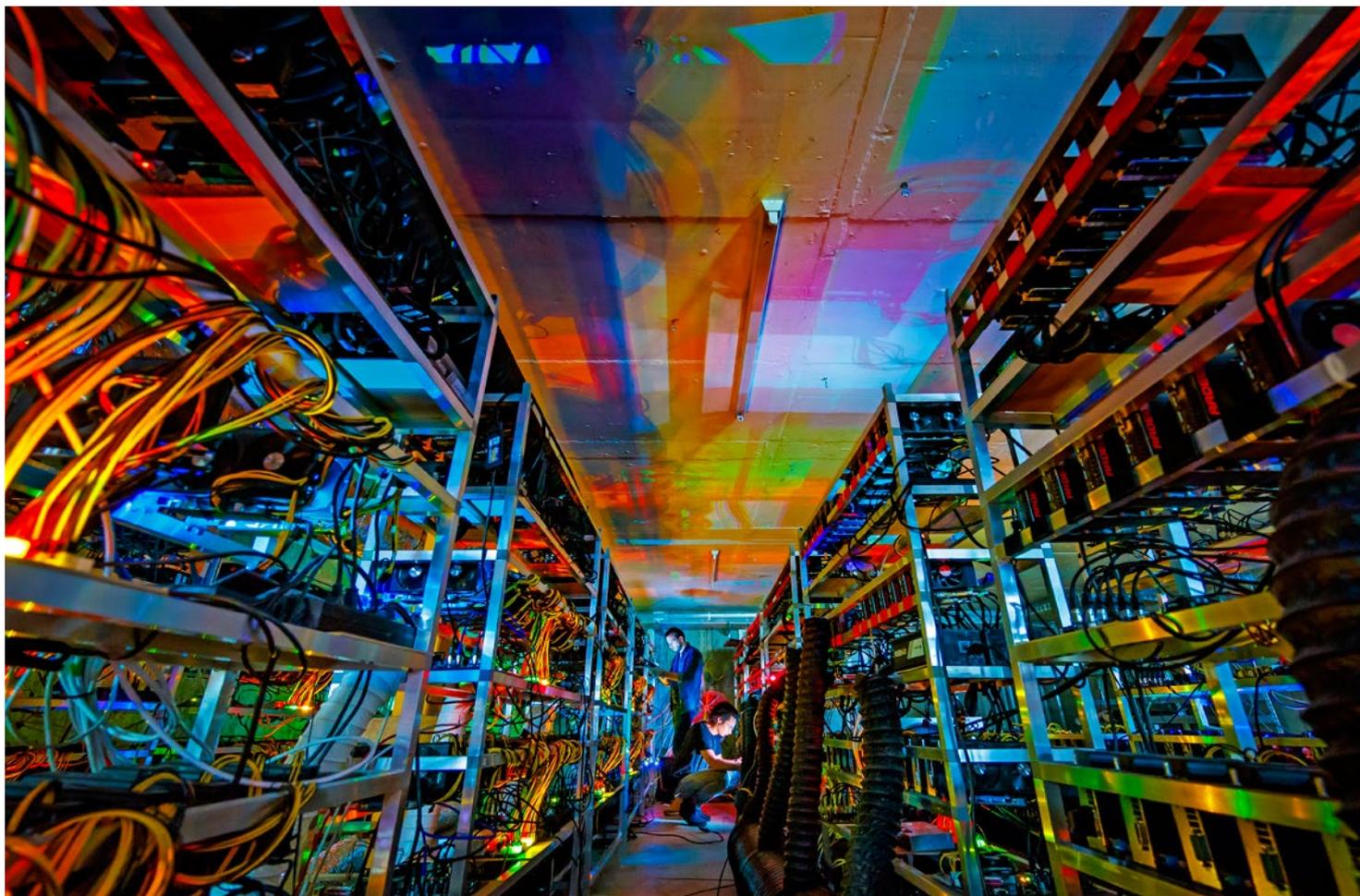
Several administrations have implemented actions intended to facilitate and oversee the development of this concept. In the city of Zug, citizens can pay for administrative procedures using bitcoins, the most widely used cryptocurrency. In 2014, Zug saw the first instance of fundraising for a blockchain with the launch of Ethereum and its digital currency, the ether. In plain language, shareholders invested in this project with classic currency, and they received ethers in exchange. In Geneva, the Directorate General for Economic Development has published a guide dedicated to the issuing of cryptocurrencies and their tax treatment. Facebook has chosen

Geneva as the central home for its upcoming and already controversial cryptocurrency, Libra, for which operations are led via a subsidiary – Libra Network – and an association. "Facebook considered that the other blockchains and their currencies were not fast enough. Their plan is to offer an optimal payment and money transfer system to their 2.3 billion users," explains Pignon.

Returning power to the people of the world

Shaban Shaame welcomes the arrival of Facebook's Libra because Facebook is offering to entrust the management of this project to an association made up of numerous actors, such as PayPal and Visa. Libra would also be supported by several strong currencies. It is this decentralisation that is at the heart of the blockchain project. It originated in 2008 with the bitcoin, a protocol created by cyber-punks as a reaction to the financial crisis, with the aim of regaining a handle on a financial system that was out of control.

According to the head of EverdreamSoft, the diffusion of this technology will have a tremendous impact. Blockchain will place more power in the hands of the world's citizens, who will be able to participate in exchanges and value creation without the use of banks, notaries and administrative authorities. These connections will take place in a new legal and social environment. "Each blockchain will offer a political system to its users, for example with social rules like a tax in-



tended for use in pension insurance,” says Shaame. Collective operations will be created above and beyond borders. Each person will be able to participate by providing work, funding or even simply promotion. As such, a visitor to a site could be paid in cryptocurrency.

Certificate access in just one click

A blockchain provides reliable and up to date information. In Geneva, the commercial register is accessible in just one mouse click via the Ethereum system. Another example would be the trade in raw materials, which involves a host of partners and physical documents. A blockchain will simplify this business. More broadly speaking, civil and commercial records and CVs could be consulted using blockchains, all via smartphone. This is the idea behind a solution developed by Wecan, in collaboration with the canton of Valais and a Swiss insurance company. Mountain Pro will enable a client to

instantly find out whether or not a mountain guide possesses the necessary authorisations to practise, through verifications conducted at source using an insurance company, for example. A blockchain will also guarantee the sustainability of virtual items: for instance, EverdreamSoft offers the purchase of digital video game figurines to its clients. A ‘token’ describes the object in full and validates the act of ownership using a code. “Blockchain will be the notary of a new economy,” claims Shaame. Bitcoin alone, however, requires an enormous level of energy to function: 0.12% of world electricity consumption in total. But this analysis fails to account for savings resulting from blockchain on a global scale, argue some specialists.

Cryptocurrencies: the driving motor behind blockchain

Exchanges take place using bitcoin or ether, currencies which are notably

Blockchain technology: the old Gondo goldmine (VS) is now a cryptocurrency-mining site – an energy-intensive operation.

Photo: Keystone

used as remuneration for the people who stock blockchain ledgers. Indeed, founded in 2013 in Zug, the company Bitcoin Suisse offers the purchase, exchange and storage of its clients’ cryptocurrencies, of which it handles 125 types. A pioneer in Zug’s Crypto Valley, this company has seen its employee numbers quadruple between the beginning of 2018 and July 2019. In 2018, it reported a net income of 43.7 million francs, according to the head of marketing, Marc Baumann. The city of Zug in fact uses a digital platform developed by Bitcoin Suisse for its cryptocurrency transactions with its citizens. For the time being, various technological and legal monitoring reasons mean that the use of cryptocurrencies remains complex. It is for this reason that platforms such as Bitcoin Suisse offer to handle transfers for their clients. This is also what Facebook intends.

The “Fifth Switzerland” makes clear political demands

The “Parliament of the Fifth Switzerland”, the Council of the Swiss Abroad, demands more leadership from the Federal Council on e-voting, and underlines the importance of the framework agreement for the 458,000 Swiss living in the EU.

There will be no e-voting option available to the “Fifth Switzerland” for the 2019 federal elections. The Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) views this as a major setback. The CSA therefore demanded more leadership from the Federal Council in regard to e-voting at its meeting during the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Montreux.

In a resolution drafted in Montreux, the CSA specifically calls on the Federal Council to ensure that there is a trustworthy, financially viable system in place for e-voting. Moreover, this system must be available to all voters of the “Fifth Switzerland” by no later than the 2023 federal elections. While in Montreux, Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis promised only what had already been announced by the Federal Council in June: to re-frame the e-voting trial phase by the end of 2020.

The e-voting setback is also hindering the reforms of the CSA. It is highly unlikely that it will be able to implement its goal of introducing the direct election of its members without the electronic voting channel. The reform was thus postponed in Montreux. OSA President Remo Gysin had the following to say on the matter: “We’re delaying something that we’d like to have sorted.”

Framework agreement – a loaded term

The term e-voting is not the only one causing unease for the CSA. It is also nervous about Switzerland’s framework agreement with the European Union (EU). The CSA has assessed the development in the relationship between Switzerland and the EU as “worrying”. It is demanding that the Federal Council consider the concerns of the 458,000 Swiss living in the EU during further clarifications of the framework agreement. The CSA’s content-based position has not changed in this regard: it supports the free movement of persons, and wants it to be regulated.

Finally, the election manifesto approved by the CSA contains further political demands. Besides the core demand to make it easier



Political signals from Montreux: resolutions of the Council of the Swiss Abroad call on the Federal Council to act.

Photo: Adrian Moser

rather than more difficult for the “Fifth Switzerland” to exercise their political rights, it also refers once again to the discrimination shown by the Swiss banks against Swiss people abroad. Talking of the 2019 elections: Montreux was also the place where the political parties competed for the votes of the “Fifth Switzerland”. Their performance during the last legislative term was the subject of heated debate: according to an analysis by swissinfo, the concerns of the “Fifth Switzerland” were best supported by the SP and least supported by the SVP.

“What will tomorrow’s world hold?” – this was the topic of this year’s Congress of the Swiss Abroad. Remo Gysin introduced the numerous expert lectures on the topic with the following remark: “There are points of no return all over the world.” His conclusion: “We have a clear duty to act.”

(MUL)

CSA election manifesto: ogy.de/aso-wahlmanifest

Party ranking: ogy.de/swissinfo-ranking

Candidates of the “Fifth Switzerland”: www.revue.ch

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Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer
Fondazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero
Fundazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero
Fundazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero

Skiing and snowboarding into the new year

There are still some free spots available to children aged 8 to 14 on the FYSA New Year camp in Valbella in the Grisons mountains.

Date: Thursday, 26 December 2019

to Saturday, 4 January 2020

Number of participants: 42

Cost: CHF 900 (contribution to the camp)

Ski or snowboard hire: Approx. CHF 150

Registration deadline: 30 September 2019

Registration

The winter camp for children aged 8 to 14 in Valbella (canton of Grisons) is the only Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA) 2019-20 winter season event for which you can still book places. For further details as well as the relevant registration form, visit www.sjas.ch/en. We are able to offer price reductions whenever these are justified. We are also happy to post you our information brochure on request.

Financial support for Swiss families living abroad

The FYSA wants to enable all Swiss children living abroad to visit and experience Switzerland for themselves at least once, regardless of their family's financial circumstances. To make this possible, the FYSA raises money

every year on behalf of such children. The FYSA urges families who lack the necessary financial means to register for the camp and fill in the "Application form for reduction of the camp fees" – so that their children can also spend some time in Switzerland. For further details on the opportunities and conditions for price reductions, please contact the FYSA administrative office directly.

Thank you

In the last twelve months, many readers have paid a voluntary subscription to help fund the print edition of "Swiss Review". We in the editorial team would like to thank you for this support, which has reinforced our intention to continue publishing on paper for the foreseeable future – to the standard to which you are accustomed. Specifically, your support has enabled us to lend the necessary amount of depth to complex themes – e.g. the debate surrounding e-voting, and background research ahead of this autumn's national elections. The funding makes us even more committed to producing a publication that provides an eminently readable and – in the case of the print edition – tangible, tactile connection to your home country.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The FYSA looks forward to welcoming children who are keen to get to know and experience their homeland up close. (LR)

For more information, please contact:

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Doing an apprenticeship or studying in Switzerland

Swiss Abroad can also benefit from the excellent and diverse range of educational opportunities available in Switzerland.

Apprenticeship

After compulsory schooling, young people in Switzerland can choose from over 250 apprenticeships or go on to further education at high school or specialised middle school. However, the route they take at this stage is not necessarily binding. Not only can you still do an apprenticeship after getting a high-school diploma, but it is also possible to study at a university of applied science on the back of vocational training and vocational baccalaureate.

How to choose the right vocational course? The official website www.berufsberatung.ch offers a wealth of information such as job descriptions. A specific counselling session can be provided for Swiss Abroad either face-to-face in Berne at the career guidance center (BIZ) or via Skype (register via [educationsuisse](http://educationsuisse.ch)).

Whether you want to be a winemaker or an engineer, the quality and professional relevance of vocational training in Switzerland are rated very highly.

Photo: Keystone



in a wide range of fields. Normally, the prerequisite for admission is an apprenticeship with vocational baccalaureate. However, it is also possible to gain entry on the strength of a high-school diploma plus a year's work experience in your future field of study.

The universities of teacher education provide teacher training at all school levels. The admission requirements vary depending on the course concerned.

All Swiss universities organise open days that usually take place in autumn or winter. Information on the entry requirements for students with a foreign qualification is available at www.swissuniversities.ch.

Information and contact details

The team at [educationsuisse](http://educationsuisse.ch) speak English, German, French, Italian and Spanish. They can help you find the right answers to your questions and give support on specific enquiries. The www.educationsuisse.ch website provides an explanatory overview of the Swiss education system, clearly depicted in a diagram. For further information or queries: email info@educationsuisse.ch or phone +41 (0)31 356 61 04. (RG)

[educationsuisse](http://educationsuisse.ch), Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, Switzerland,
info@educationsuisse.ch, www.educationsuisse.ch

Higher education at a university

The ten public universities offer courses in law, economics, mathematics, natural science, humanities, and social science. The Federal Institutes of Technology (ETHZ and EPFL) focus on engineering, mathematics, and natural science. You can obtain a bachelor degree after studying for a total of three years, while a subsequent master course will last a further one and a half to two years. To gain admission, students need to have obtained their Swiss high-school diploma or a foreign equivalent. Special entry requirements apply to medicine.

The Universities of applied sciences, which comprise around 60 schools and departments (including arts and music), offer practice-oriented bachelor and master degrees





Ready for camp life in the snow?

For two weeks, the young Swiss Abroad will have the chance to indulge in the joys of winter sports and make friends from around the world.

As well as skiing and snowboarding, young participants will be able to discover the Swiss mountains and take part in a range of activities in the cosy setting of the chalet and its surrounding area. An adventure packed with shared moments and discovery!

New Year Ski camp in Les Diablerets (VD) from 27.12.2019 to 4.1.2020

Participants can look forward to a range of activities at this camp in the heart of the Vaud Alps. As well as ski or snowboard lessons in small groups and a rich programme of accompanying events, there will also be time for meeting new friends. Camp members will be looked after by a team of trained and enthusiastic instructors. This programme is for teenagers aged 15–18. www.lesbosquets.ch and www.villars-dialerets.ch

Contact the Youth Service: Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne; tel. +41 31 356 61 00, email: youth@aso.ch

Winter sports camp in Anzère (VS) from 27.12.2019 to 4.1.2020

This winter, we are also offering a winter sports camp in the Pennine Alps for young adults aged 18 and over. The ski and snowboard camp will take place in Anzère. For a sneak peek at the ski resort, see: www.anzere.ch.

Registration

The registration form for the winter camps is now available online. For more detailed information on the camps and for registration forms, visit our websites: www.aso.ch and www.swisscommunity.org.

Youth Service survey

Last spring, the Youth Service of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSE) launched a survey in order to better address the expectations of the Swiss Abroad. The results of this survey will be published on www.aso.ch. (MB)

Who or what is YPSA?

YPSA stands for Youth Parliament of the Swiss Abroad. It is not a parliament in the traditional sense, but rather a platform for young Swiss Abroad. YPSA President Roberto Landolina provides an insight into the aims and activities of the youth parliament in an article available at www.revue.ch. He also reveals the highlights of May's YPSA event in Italy. Landolina's account shows what young people can expect from such occasions: "It was great to see people working together and developing ideas, despite not knowing each other. We hope they made the most of this chance to learn and develop their team-working skills." (MUL)

Review at www.revue.ch

YPSA homepage www.ypsa.ch

Information

Notify your local Swiss representation of your email address(es) and mobile phone number(s), or of changes to these, and register at the online desk (on the FDFA website at www.eda.admin.ch or via www.swissabroad.ch) to select your preferred format for receiving "Swiss Review" and other publications. Please contact your Swiss representation if you have trouble signing in. Both the latest and previous issues of "Swiss Review" are available to read and/or print out at any time via www.revue.ch. "Swiss Review" (or "Gazzetta Svizzera" in Italy) is delivered free of charge electronically (by email) or as a print edition to the homes of all Swiss Abroad. It is also available via an iOS/Android app.

E-voting currently on hold – testing process to be reoriented

Electronic voting has proved popular so far, particularly among Swiss Abroad. Unfortunately, it is currently out of operation.

Until the beginning of this year, e-voting was possible in ten cantons – courtesy of two platforms developed by Swiss Post and the canton of Geneva. Now both these systems are out of operation. Why is this the case?

The canton of Geneva had already intimated last year that it would no longer continue developing its e-voting platform – before announcing in June 2019 that the system would no longer be available with immediate effect.

Swiss Post wanted to roll out its new and fully verifiable e-voting system in 2019. In February of this year, it disclosed the source code and put the system through resilience testing (also known as a ‘public intrusion test’). Although the trial was a success, test participants discovered serious flaws in the source code affecting both the existing and new system. Swiss Post therefore decided to pull the existing system and focus on making improvements to the new one, which it intends to offer to the cantons for piloting from 2020.

The Federal Chancellery announced a review after news of the flaws in the Swiss Post system came to light in March 2019. Shortcomings requiring analysis also include weaknesses in relation to the licensing and certification procedures. However, the Federal Chancellery has no indication that the identified flaws have resulted in votes being manipulated in previous ballots.

In light of these developments, Switzerland currently offers no e-voting.

E-voting not yet a regular voting channel

In 2017, the Federal Council initiated efforts to establish e-voting as the third regular voting channel – alongside ballot-box voting and postal voting. The plan was to push through a partial revision of the Political Rights Act in order to simplify the licensing procedures and regulate the most important requirements in law, namely the verifiability of votes cast and how the result is reached, the transparency of the systems, and accessibility.

But there is now a delay. Consultations have revealed that a clear majority of cantons and political parties welcome the introduction of e-voting in principle. The Conference of Cantonal Governments as well as 19 cantons support e-voting being introduced into regular operation. However, most of the political parties in particular believe that now is not the right time to take this step. Consequently, the Federal Council announced in June that e-voting would remain in its pilot phase and that the testing process would be reoriented by the end of 2020 in consultation with the cantons.

E-voting continues to be regarded as an important service for voters. The aim is to establish stable operations using the latest generation of systems. Other measures include extending independent audits, increasing transparency and trust, and encouraging greater academic input. Requirements and processes are currently being reviewed and redefined for this purpose. (EDA)



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Federal votes

The Federal Council determines voting proposals at least four months before the voting date. National Council elections take place on 20 October 2019.

For information about the National Council elections, visit www.ch.ch/en/elections2019. Everything you need to know about voting proposals (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations by Parliament and the Federal Council, electronic voting, etc.) is available at www.admin.ch/votes or via the Federal Chancellery's VoteInfo app.

The Federal Council has decided not to hold a federal popular vote on 24 November 2019. The next voting date is 9 February 2020.

Popular initiatives

The following federal popular initiative had been launched at the time of going to press (deadline for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- “Yes to giving the public more say in health and accident insurance” (02.01.2021)

The list of pending popular initiatives is available in German at www.bk.admin.ch > Politische Rechte > Volksinitiativen > Hängige Volksinitiativen



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COMMUNITY FOR THE SWISS ABROAD



Giving people a second chance

Lucerne-born Matthias Oppliger (45) offers a new start to victims of human trafficking by employing them at his sewing business in Tel Aviv – a project that the Israeli government has got to know about.

Idea: It all began on a family holiday in Tel Aviv. During their time there, the Oppligers came up with the idea of creating jobs for former sex workers and other victims of human trafficking. Israel proved to be the perfect place to grow their new business.

Project: kite.pride makes bags and rucksacks out of used kite-surfing sails, parachutes, yacht sails, and wetsuits. In doing so, the company wants to give former victims of human trafficking a new start – by offering fair wages for fair work in a secure, exploitation-free environment.

Location: CEO and founder Matthias Oppliger chose a strategic location in southern Tel Aviv – in a neighbourhood plagued by the impact of human trafficking, where many former refugees now live. Many women from the former Soviet states end up here and are forced into prostitution.

Success story: Oppliger has a team of 15 employees and eight volunteers from all around the world. Not all of his workers have had a traumatic past. There are also volunteers, including from Switzerland, who come regularly to help – young people who want to do something worthwhile on holiday and use their time in Israel productively. “You get out what you put in,” says Oppliger. “That’s a wage worth working for.”

A full-length article about the project has been published (in German, French and Italian) at swissinfo.ch – the ten-language online service of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation. Do you also live abroad? Upload your Instagram pictures with the hashtag [#WeAreSwissAbroad](https://www.instagram.com/WeAreSwissAbroad).

A fateful kiss



SIMONE MEIER:
"Kuss" Kein & Aber Verlag,
Zurich 2019
256 pages; CHF 28 or
approx. EUR 22

"Yann and Gerda loved watching programmes about emigrants, housewives and other dreamers," writes Simone Meier about the two main characters in her new novel. "Like voyeurs, they loved studying how people with no money would sacrifice everything for the sake of a pipe dream." Yann and Gerda have their own aspirations. The couple are in their mid-thirties and have just moved into a disused worker's cottage on the edge of town. Gerda has lost her job as a graphic designer and is now putting her creative juices into transforming the dilapidated property into something homely. Yann, who works for a think-tank, has no option but to play the traditional role of breadwinner – and is not completely unhappy with this state of affairs. Gerda's thoughts begin to spiral. An imaginary dalliance with Alex culminates in a kiss – more intimate than real – that sends her into a tumult of emotions.

At the same time, we get to know a woman called Valerie – a 50-year-old journalist who is living temporarily next door in the house that she inherited. The two narratives intertwine, ending in a bitter finale.

The story takes place in a Swiss city but could easily be set anywhere in our urban world. It portrays a generation of thirty- to forty-somethings, many of whom still live together in shared spaces. Theirs is a journey with no clear destination, albeit that of laying down roots and starting a family if they can. They are torn between emancipation on the one hand and conservative values on the other. Retro, industrial chic is in, while a well-paid job is an absolute must. Simone Meier's novel steers away from social critique. Nevertheless, the author is a clever interpreter of her urban surroundings, skilfully highlighting the protagonists' personalities in order to weave her observations into the narrative. Valerie cuts a likeable, serene figure who embarks on a new relationship. The book is very readable but also unsettling, straddling a thought-provokingly fine line between imagination and reality. Even when the veneer peels away, the characters prefer to watch television and fantasise.

Simone Meier, born in 1970, grew up in the canton of Aargau. After doing German studies, American studies, and art history at university, she worked as culture editor at the "WochenZeitung WOZ" and the "Tages-Anzeiger". She now writes for the Watson news portal and lives in Zurich. "Kuss" (German for kiss) is her third novel.

RUTH VON GUNTEN

Makala, double meaning rap



MAKALA:
"Radio Suicide"
2019, Colors Records

Genevan rapper Makala is not one to mince his words. "Radio Suicide", the name of his latest studio album, released in June, serves as proof. Neither is the young man of Congolese descent concerned about his music being played on the radio. In this album he has put together 21 titles packed with unmistakable acoustic freedom and poetic licence. The explosion of musical ideas, created alongside producer Varnish La Piscine, makes for an admittedly challenging first listen. Makala's rap follows a chilled funk, even reggae beat, but the instrumentals are distorted, mixed, and interrupted by flashes that are sure to keep listeners alert. The lyrics speak of sweet and bitter sentiment, with each further listening revealing a new element.

Founder and member of the Swiss collective SuperWak Clique (see January 2018 edition of "Swiss Review"), Makala tells of his success and its effects on his social relationships. He lyricises about social networks and their vanity. He reveals his fragility, in a world of heavyweights. "La première fois que j'ai fait l'amour, j'ai fait croire que je l'avais déjà fait," chants the rapper in the track Goatier: "The first time I made love, I pretended I had already done it". Money and success? "I've got my hand in my trousers, soon I'll have my hands on the money" he asserts in ICIELAO: "J'ai la main dans le froc (pantalon). Bientôt j'ai les mains dans le fric." The Genevan excels in creating lexical clashes, with his words provoking a multitude of stimulating ideas. The flow of Makala's voice is similar to that of North American rapper, Snoop Dogg: it is smooth, almost a whisper. A heavy presence of slang and 'verlan' (the coded use of language in which syllables are inversed) render the lyrics understandable, but not always accessible. Indeed, it is an album which has piqued the interest of specialist French critics: "I could say that we have here the greatest French-language rap album of the decade, except that it is not quite a rap album," writes Etienne Menu on the rap blog, Musique journal, before continuing: "rather, it is more than a rap album." This is a sign that the Genevan rappers and their independent label, Colors Records, have truly succeeded in establishing themselves outside Switzerland.

STEPHANE HERZOG

Annik Grob



Annik Grob, 12, lives happily with her family in Therwil in the canton of Basel-Landschaft. She isn't thinking of emigrating any time soon. For a competition organised by the German Emigration Center museum in Bremerhaven, Annik imagined, however, that she was a young girl leaving her home country. "What ten things would you pack if you emigrated?" was the question that the museum asked children and teenagers to answer, inviting them to choose the contents of their own personal "emigration suitcase". The eleven most creative entries – Annik's included – featured in a special exhibition.

The schoolgirl impressed the jury with her idea of packing a lengthy book in addition to nine other things. "Any book about horses that has 20,000 pages so I can read it for a very, very long time," she wrote. "Which is about as long as I'll need to learn the local language and buy books in my new home country." And if she failed to learn the lingo in that time, she could start the book again, "because I would have definitely forgotten the beginning 20,000 pages later".

Annik's items also included a radio, a CD of rap artist Namika, a camera, clothes, money, a case holding 40 colouring pencils, her identity card, some jewellery, and her riding-school horse Resuelto. Her suitcase has at least got as far as Bremerhaven. Seven million people embarked on the long journey to the New World from the North Sea port in the 19th century. Annik can certainly envisage moving to a different country one day. "Staying put in the same place is boring."

THEODORA PETER

Apprenticeships are losing ground

The practice-oriented apprenticeship is a Swiss success story. However, its popularity is declining among the young, who are increasingly turning to grammar school (Gymnasium) on completion of their compulsory schooling. This is particularly evident among girls, with one in two targeting a grammar school place. As a result, there were 15,000 vacant apprenticeships at the start of the 2019 Swiss academic year. That is problematic for many companies.

(MUL)

Lukas Bärfuss receives the Georg Büchner Prize

For the first time in 25 years, the most prestigious literary prize for German has been awarded to a Swiss national: author and playwright Lukas Bärfuss (1971) is the winner of this year's Georg Büchner Prize worth EUR 50,000. He will receive the award on 2 November in Darmstadt. The jury praised Bärfuss as an "outstanding essayist and playwright of contemporary German literature". Bärfuss views today's world from an uncompromisingly questioning, curious and appreciative perspective.

(MUL)

Historic women's strike

The women's strike on 14 June 2019 (see "Review" 3/2019) was the largest political demonstration in modern Swiss history. Hundreds of thousands of women participated in the day of action, and stopped work. The strike achieved historic dimensions in all major cities. Its main demand was equality for women in the workplace and in society, with the slogan "equal pay for equal work".

(MUL)

The Matterhorn is crumbling

The Swiss alpine symbol, the Matterhorn, is in the headlines: mountaineers want it to be closed following a number of fatal accidents. However, the local Zermatt council wants to keep it open. The accidents have been caused by rising temperatures: as the permafrost thaws, parts of the secure route on the Matterhorn have collapsed, say the mountaineers. Melting permafrost is a problem shared by all Swiss alpine areas.

(MUL)

Criticism of arms exports

Swiss voters are going to have their say on arms exports, as the signatures required for the Correction Initiative were gathered in record time. The initiative was submitted in June and is a response to the Federal Council's plan to export arms to countries engaged in civil war (see "Review" 3/2019 Editorial).

(MUL)



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