



Contribution from Ströbeck



Impact of Tourism on small Communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends of Cultural Villages of Europe,

First we want to say our thanks to everybody for the friendliness and hospitality we found here. We have a nice weekend in your lovely village, everything is organized perfectly and we are happy to be with you. None of us had ever been to England before, but we are sure to come back soon.

Much we have already heard today from different views, and it is nearly perfect for us to be placed just behind the contribution of Bystre because we have got the same problems: a high unemployment rate and young people to leave their village for better chances on the job market.

In the past centuries tourism developed in Germany as everywhere in Europe. First the seaside resorts at the North and the Baltic Sea and the Alps were the focus of interest. Later other smaller scenic towns and villages with pleasant climate developed into recreation parks. Simultaneously the interest for cultural and historical topics increased.

That way our region, the northern edge of the Harz-mountains and its surroundings, became important for tourism. Despite the climatic aspect of the Harz-mountains our region is famous for history as well.

Our village itself is located at the edge of the Harz-mountains and is over 1000 years old. The first documentary mention points to the year 995. At that time the German kingdom was built in our region. Neighbouring cities like Halberstadt, Quedlinburg, Goslar and Magdeburg were its important centres.

For a long time Ströbeck belonged to the bishopric "Halberstadt". After the Thirty-year's war it was assigned to the electoral region "Brandenburg" which later became the Kingdom Prussia.

After 1945 Ströbeck was part of the Soviet occupation zone, the later GDR, and today it is in the centre of the reunified Germany in the federal state of "Saxony-Anhalt". This is one of the poorest regions in Germany today.

For centuries our village was formed by agriculture. Despite the trade this is even today predominating.

Big farms with houses and barns in half-timbered style are even today typical for our village with about 1200 inhabitants. The centre of the village is named "Platz zum Schachspiel" which means "place of the chess-game". It has a big paved chessboard on it, on which according to old tradition games of chess are played with living chessmen. This is tradition since several centuries.

The saga says, a noble prisoner (an electoral prince or bishop) taught the farmers who guarded him, how to play chess. These Ströbeck farmers passed on their knowledge from generation to generation up to today. Since 1823 chess is an obligatory subject at Ströbeck's school. Famous people like princes and kings who travelled through our village where welcomed with a chess game.

You could think, this was the beginning of cultural tourism in Ströbeck. But it is not that way.

The number of visitors was always small. Even the people of Ströbeck didn't do much to attract tourists up to the German reunion. There were only few overnight accommodations and sights accessible for visitors.

Finally after 1990 we began to present our rich cultural history to a wide public. At the same time we changed our village's name from Ströbeck into "Schachdorf Ströbeck" which means "Chess-Village of Ströbeck". We have got a small chess-museum, and we make publicity in several ways.

We are just at the beginning of this development. But we know very well that we won't reach the touristic importance of our neighbouring cities with 30,000 inhabitants and a functioning infrastructure. Only our special quality in culture will make possible a modest development in tourism and simultaneously some activities on job market.

Our objectives are:

- Creation of an unmistakable image by the attractive sight of the village and an intact cultural scene
- Improvement of the villages infrastructure, for example by the promotion programme "LEADER+"
- Integration of the community into a wider region

Despite these things hospitable inhabitants should make the unmistakable image for touristic development.

As newcomers in touristic subjects we hope for important information for our future work coming from this meeting.

Thank you for your attention!