

Development strategie Rügen – Traffic

Ladys and Gentlemen

when I planned this presentation I asked myself, what can I tell you about Rügen, that is interesting for you here on Saaremaa. At the B7 spring conference in Kuressaare was discussed whether it is a good idea to build a bridge from Muhu to the mainland. This was also an issue at the meeting of the B7 Board and SC with the Estonian island- politician group in the Riigikogu in Tallinn in autumn. So I think the challenges of "Traffic" are a relevant issue for you.

Rügen has a fixed link to the mainland since 1936 for road and railway. Last year, we got a second beautiful road bridge with three lanes and a direct connection to the next motorway. The capacity of the old Bridge was 18.000 vehicles per day. The new bridge can carry 23.000 additional cars per day. Two expectations are connected with this new bridge. Firstly the long traffic queues from and to Rügen in the high season in Summer and at Newyear should be eliminated by opening the bottleneck. As a result the number of tourists can increase. This is very important for us since the economy of Rügen depends very much on tourism.

The second expectation is that the new bridge will improve the link of the port of Sassnitz-Mukran which will result in a higher cargo handling and a positive economic development. The ferry and transit port of Sassnitz-Mukran is the third biggest German harbour of the Baltic Sea. Direct passanger and cargo lines are connected with ports on Bornholm, in Sweden Lithuania, Russia and Finnland. Only the port of Mukran offers the possibility to change the broad gauge of russian or finish railway-waggon in western european standard gauge. The aim is that the port holds its relevant position and gains in importance.

It is also intended to locate manufacturing industry in the direct environment of the port in order to create urgently needed jobs. One of the biggest problems for Rügen is the high unemployment rat which fluctuate according to the season up to 20 % in the winter.

Now, I dont ´t know if the bridgeproject on Saaremaa is also connected with the expectation of transforming your recently built cruise liner harbour into a ferry and transit port of national importance. But I am sure that you also intend to get more tourists on your Island by building the bridge.

If this is the case, then you face similar problems that Rügen has today. The improvement of the link will lead to a strong increase of traffic on your island and so you will also need a strategy to handle this additional traffic. Because of that in my presentation I want to talk about traffic, not only about car traffic but also about other kinds of mobility.

As you probably know, Germany is a federal republic. This means that the regulations for responsibility is very complicated in many sections of public life. My ten minutes, which I have for my presentation will not be long enough to explain this complicate system and therefor I won´t even try it. The German state can be responsible, the country (in our case it is Mecklenburg-Vorpommern), we as the county, a town or even a village. In our county we have 42 communities with an own mayor and a little council. Responsibility for roads is on every level. So we have national roads, country roads, county roads and community roads.

In managing the challenges of traffic the county government of Rügen is responsible only for a little part of it. We have to build, maintain and repair county roads, bicycle roads beside the county roads and to organise the public transport by busses.

Normally in case that traffic strongly increases, additional roads will be built. This is also planned on Rügen. The main destinations of traffic, for example the ferry port, tourist attractions like the chalk cliffs, the beautiful sand beaches and the sea resorts are located mostly on the northern and eastern coast of Rügen. The capital of our county, Bergen auf Rügen with more than 14.000 inhabitants is located in the centre of the island. The bridge to mainland on the other hand is located in the south-west of Rügen near the Hanseatic city of Stralsund. This demands a big road building project. Parallel to the old main connection road from the Rügenbridge to Bergen, a new approximately 30 km long expressway is projected and also a detour south of Bergen. Responsible is the German State which also has financed the new Rügenbridge and the recently build connection to the next motorway.

And yet this new projected roads will not solve the traffic problems Rügen is facing. The prognosis is, that there will still be a lot of traffic queues on the island, since the capacity of the whole traffic network of the island will not be sufficient.

Another additional problem is that many roads are tree lined avenues and an extension of these roads would mean to fall at least one row of trees. This isn't possible, since these avenues are on the one hand very important for the Rügen landscape and as a touristic place of interest. And on the other hand these tree rows are under strict nature protection and even protected by the constitution of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. So we have to look for good alternatives.

Many efforts are put into making the island more attractive for cyclers and hikers so that the inland traffic, caused for example by the tourists exploiting the island, can use environmental friendly means of transport. Tourism agencies advertise special holiday packages for them. We are working on creating an attractive network of bicycle and walking ways in good conditions. (I am not telling you the problems of a county government which has no competences at the most roads on our territory). It is important to develop the necessary infrastructure including hire service for bicycles, good road signing for cycling and walking, and low price accommodations like hay hotels and also to maintain the network in a good condition. Tasks for a lot of private and public actors. A link between bicycle traffic and public transport is made by busses with capacity to transport bicycles.

The public transport on Rügen compared to that in other rural areas in Germany offers an attractive timetable. A so called "Amber ticket" offers the possibility to travel with all trains and busses on Rügen and in Stralsund with one Ticket at one day. Tourists receive good recommendations for sightseeing tours with public transport by bus or train. One part of the public transport is a historical steam-railway line called "Raging Roland". Taking this train is a very interesting way to discover the beautiful landscape of the south-east.

But not everything is successful and improving. We also experience step backs. There were nighttrain connections from different metropolitan regions in Germany and even from Switzerland to Rügen for many years. This offer was cancelled by German Railway because they were not economically enough. And also the Malmö-Express, a traditional nighttrain connection from Berlin to Malmö in Sweden via Rügen no longer stops at one station in our region. We have tried to influence decisions like that, but to no success until now.

Concluding I can say that a fixed link will surely bring additional traffic to an island. It is important to be prepared for this. Road-building is one possible solution but not sufficient to solve all the expected problems. A great number of innovative projects and ideas are necessary to insure a mobility which is friendly to the environment and acceptable for the island.

One last idea. At the moment the country of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern plans a county-reform. At the moment we have 6 cities and 12 counties with an own government in our country. It is planed that only two cities and 6 counties will remain. This would mean for Rügen that the county-history of more than 200 years would end in 2011 and we have to join a new county together with the city of Stralsund and the county of Nordvorpommern. 2011 is also the year, when Rügen has the B7 chairmanship. I really hope that this year 2011 is not the last year of our B7-membership.

We are still fighting against this plan of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. By the help of the constitution court we could stop the first reform attempt in 2007. There is a strong island identity on Rügen although we have a bridge connection for more than 70 years. I don´t know for sure but I think if these two bridges wouldn´t exist, it would probably be easier for us to win this fight, since Island without bridges can protect themselves easierly from a takeover by mainland governments.

I know nothing about reforms in Estonia. But perhaps this is also an issue that you on Saaremaa should think about in the future discussion about advantages and disadvantages of a fixed link to mainland.

Thank you, for your attention.

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