

# From Malchin to Cape Town (and back again)

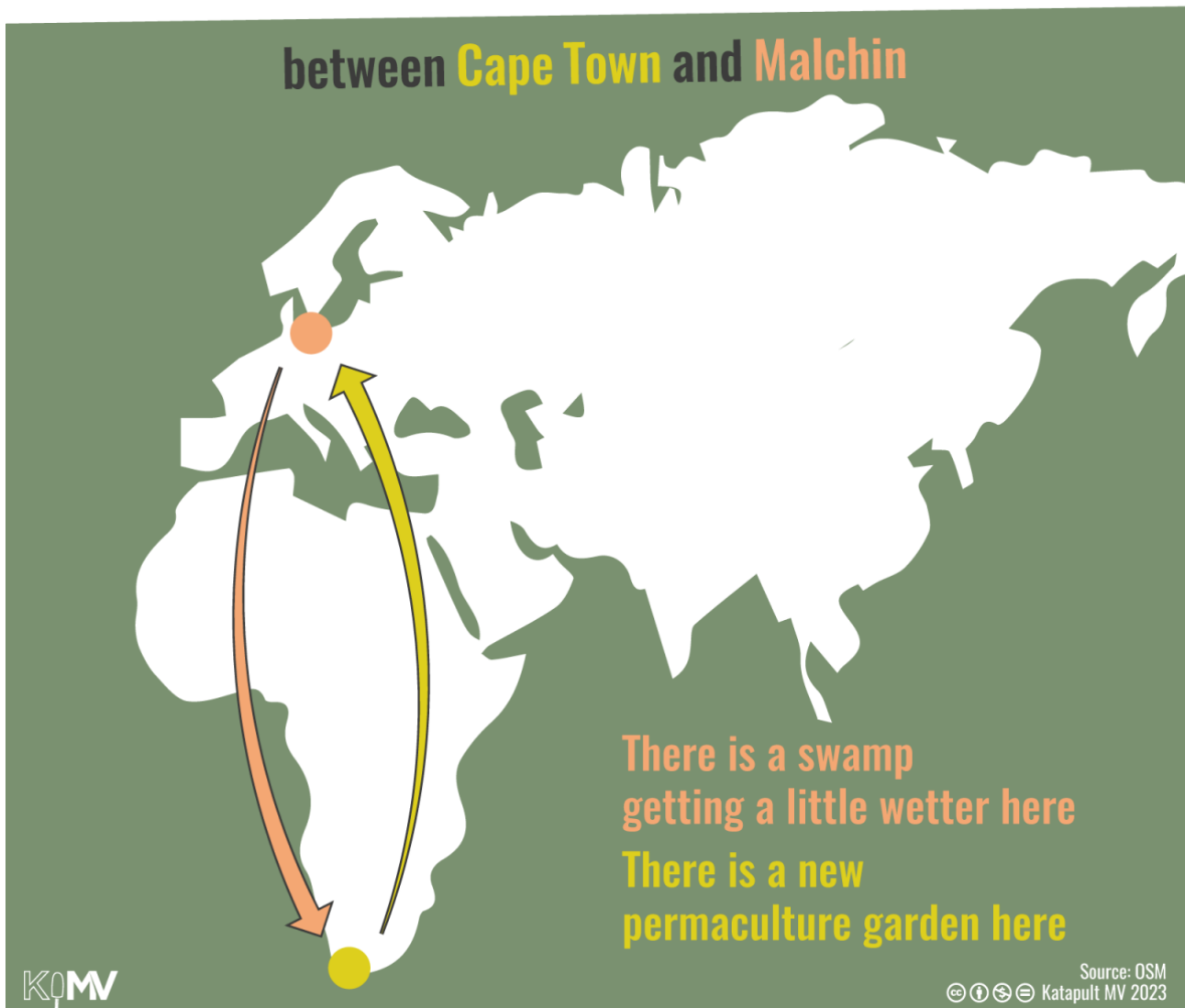
*As part of a climate sponsorship, ten South African young people have spent two weeks visiting ten young people from Malchin. Earlier this year, the people from Malchin were already in Cape Town. The aim of the project: to understand that the climate is changing globally and that the best way to find solutions is to work together.*

Von Swantje Furtak

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# Climate sponsorship

between **Cape Town** and **Malchin**



ARTIKEL TEILEN

The climate sponsorship project was initiated by the *Eine-Welt Landesnetzwerk Mecklenburg-Vorpommern* (One-World federal network of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) and is the first of its kind. Project leader Sabina von Kessel developed the idea with a South African colleague and together they looked for a local school that would be interested in such an exchange.

The sponsorship is supported by the South African organisation *The Sprightly Seed* and the German *Projekthof Karnitz*. It was financed by the German-African Youth Office, the North German Foundation for Environment and Development, and partly by the German participants themselves.

Von Kessel hopes that the exchange between the young people from Cape Town and Malchin might lead to a change of perspective. With success! Katapult MV spoke with Rayvon Du Plessis (17) from Cape Town and Carl Engel (17) from Malchin about climate change, politics and their view of the future.

Rayvon, what was your first impression of Malchin?

R: I wanted to get to know the town better and learn more about its history. It is such a beautiful place, so clean and quiet. You appreciate that when you come from a busy city, like Cape Town.

How can I imagine your home?

R: There are a lot of children running around, making fun. The houses in my neighbourhood are very old and small, they are from Dutch and German architecture. There are a few plants and trees.

C: When we were in South Africa in February, we saw how close the houses are built next to each other. I don't know where there were plants in between. (Rayvon laughs)

What was your impression of Cape Town, Carl?

C: Well, when you do research about South Africa in Germany, they often say that many people are poor. But there were so many sports cars and such tall buildings. The money is not equally distributed among everyone, but a few people own almost everything. It is only when you go out into the townships that you also see the poverty side as well. The difference between rich and poor is much more obvious.

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**We feel the heat and the lack of rain. At the weekend it was very hot in Malchin, even hotter than back then in Cape Town.**

**Carl Engel**

*Student from **Malchin**  
and participant in the climate sponsorship  
project from the Eine-Welt-Landesnetzwerk MV*

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What did you do together in Cape Town in the spring?

R: When the Germans came, we were very excited because we were allowed to plant a permaculture garden together. Fruits grow in it all year round and vegetables are processed directly in the school kitchen. They cook with it and feed children who might not have eaten anything at home.

C: You have even started to make the garden bigger, haven't you? Because it is growing so well.

R: Yes, we hope to grow even more in the future. A few weeks ago, just before we arrived in Germany, we had strawberries.

Rayvon, how do you feel that the climate is changing in Cape Town?

R: There are actually many situations. Especially now it rains and blasts a lot. Because many of the houses are not built that modern and stable, the water easily penetrates the houses. Due to climate change, people are losing their homes. A few weeks ago, it rained so much near where I live that the government sent huge lorries. It took them three full days to pump out the water.

Are you afraid that it will get worse in the next few years?

R: Definitely. There are places in Cape Town where the water can simply sweep away buildings. Rising sea levels are also a danger, some houses are very close to the shore, some are built on artificial islands. If we don't do something about climate change, our future will become uncertain. It is the fear of losing one's home.

Carl, how do you feel when you think about climate change?

C: I think about the dry summers in particular. We feel the heat and the lack of rain. At the weekend it was very hot in Malchin, even hotter than back then in Cape Town. Even Rayvon started sweating! (both laugh)

Do you think Germany has a special responsibility with regard to climate change?

C: Of course, we could do a lot. Germany is a rich country. We should try to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and protect the environment - restore the marshes and let the forest grow.

And do you feel we are doing enough?

C: No, not at all. Especially with regard to the marshes, our Malchin-Kapstadt group talked about that a lot last week. Most of the wetlands in Germany are drained, which means that greenhouse gases are released into the atmosphere and accelerate climate change.



During their stay in Malchin, the young people were out and about in the swamp areas near the village of Tützen. Among other things, they plugged up an old drainage ditch to re-wet a swamp.

Did you visit a swamp together here?

R: Yes, when we were in the swamp, the swamp educator from the *Greifswald Moor Centrum* told us to jump. Some of us jumped and the whole ground shook. I was a bit scared because you were just waiting for the moment when the ground gave way and someone would sink in. In South Africa we also have swamps, but I haven't had a chance to visit them yet.

You have also rewetted a swamp here, haven't you?

C: Yes, in a forest near Tützen. There was a swamp there that was losing water through an old drainage ditch. We plugged up that ditch and had a lot of fun doing it. Now, when it rains in winter, the water can no longer drain away and the swamp will fill up with water again - in the hope that it will develop into a wetland again.

Did the project give you hope?

R: It was definitely interesting to know that you can do something. If I get the chance to return to Germany one day, I would like to visit this swamp again. I would like to see if our work has paid off and a tiny patch of swamp has formed.

Carl, did you know about marshes before?

C: We talked about it a bit in biology classes and I like to spend my free time in the marshes. I like to ride my stand-up paddle board through the old peat bogs. It's so quiet there, you don't hear any boats, only birds.

My school is in Malchin, and the mayor wants to re-wet the peatlands around the town. But there are conflicts with the farmers because it's their land. We have to find compromises, but the government and the EU do not support such projects with sufficient money. They rather support the ordinary way of farming, and that is the problem why most farms don't want to change.

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**Rayvon Du Plessis**

*Student from **Cape Town**  
and participant in the climate sponsorship  
project from the Eine-Welt-Landesnetzwerk MV*

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Rayvon, do you think enough is being done to defeat climate change?

R: I have to say that the government in Germany is doing much more than our government. A few weeks ago we heard that our government in South Africa is trying to allocate money to protect our wetlands. But with our politicians, we never really know how much truth there is in it. We have to stay active to make sure they are really doing their best. If you ask our mayor what plans he has to restore wetlands, he will tell you a long story and you will end up with no real answer.

Will you act differently in the future because of this climate sponsorship?



R: Definitely my behaviour will change. I see Cape Town differently now. I definitely want to work in the field of climate change.

C: My career plans have also changed. Before, I wanted to work as a computer scientist because it is a safe job. But now, through this project, the social aspects and sustainability issues have become more important to me. Let's see what happens.

One last question: What do you talk about at the end of the day?

R: Generally just about things we noticed that day. I was talking to a friend about the marsh, that it is so incredibly quiet there.

C: We also write a short reflection on our [blog](#) so we don't forget what we learned.

R: Ah, that reminds me: last night we talked about our future. There are many who want to campaign against climate change and we said that we hope to keep our group alive for this struggle.



Carl (far left) and Rayvon (5th from left) with the climate patrons from Cape Town and Malchin.