CORONA-VIRUS EDITION





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FOREWORD BY THE

The political, economic and social impacts of the coronavirus are evident all around the world. Our twin cities are also affected and are fighting the effects of the pandemic. Our South African twin city Buffalo City has had to cope with an especially painful loss. Alfred Mtsi, the former Executive Mayor and most recently Speaker of the Council. of the Council died from the effects of a COVID-19 infection. We will always remember him as a warm and welcoming host.

Yet, even in the crisis, there are developments that give us hope. The coronavirus has shown us how important cooperation is: not only on the local or national level, but also internationally. For example, we received 20,000 face masks from our Chinese twin city Xi'an. We distributed them to various institutions and staff in the health and care sector in Oldenburg and to our twin city in South Africa.

I believe it's important to maintain and bolster our international relationships, also in these difficult times. That's why we've put together a digital alternative to our UN!TE twin-city conference, which was originally scheduled for this summer. It will take place in October and November instead.

We can look forward all the more to the time after the pandemic, when visits between the twin cities will be possible again. Our new youth hostel near the train station, showcased in this newsletter, is a great stop-off point for travellers from all over the world.



Jürgen Krogmann, Lord Mayor

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UP TO LOCKDOWN IN MARCH 2020

TRADITION MEETS TRADITION: KALE & MOUCHOIR ROUGE DE CHOLET



The head table with Federal Minister for Family Affairs Franziska Giffey and State Prime Minister Stephan Weil. Photo: Torsten von Reeken

The annual dinner known as the "Defftig Ollnborger Gröönkohl-Äten" took place in Berlin for the 63rd time on 2 March 2020. The event held in Lower Saxony's permanent representation celebrates the region's "national dish" of kale. This year, our twin city Cholet added a very special gift to the occasion: the Mouchoir rouge de Cholet, a red handkerchief which was used instead of the usual place mats. It was printed with the courses and drinks served at the dinner. The gesture was quite a talking point among the guests.

A piece of cloth steeped in history

Cholet has been known for centuries as a centre of textile production and especially of handkerchiefs. Its chosen symbol is the Mouchoir rouge de Cholet. This can be traced back to a song from 1900 about a battle fought in 1793. The handkerchief is issued with a fitting text on special occasions. For the Tour de France time trial in 2018, Cholet even produced a yellow version.



Finished handkerchiefs in front of the loom with the red and white fabric. Photo: City of Cholet

After the last factory closed, the cloth has been woven since 2003 in Cholet's Museum for Textiles and Fashion. It is made into the finished handkerchiefs in a workshop for people with disabilities.

PHASE TWO OF THE NAKOPA WATER PROTECTION PROJECT



Visiting a waste water pump station with Project Manager Mkhuseli Nongogo. Photo: City of Oldenburg

From 24 to 30 June 2019, a representative of the City of Oldenburg and an employee of the water utility Oldenburgisch-Ostfriesischer Wasserverband (OOWV) spent a working trip in Buffalo City Metro. During a twoand-a-half-day workshop, the next steps were planned for the ongoing Nakopa project Awareness-Raising Campaign for the Protection of Drinking Water Resources in East London. Another element in the workshop was a report on current developments. The project has come a long way since the first joint workshop held during a visit by the South African project participants to Oldenburg in November 2018.

Initially, various stakeholders were identified who have a major influence on pollution of the water resources. The next step will be to contact them directly and raise their awareness of the issue. In 2017, Oldenburg secured funding from Engagement Global for the project as part of the Nakopa development initiative (Sustainable Development through Partnership Projects). Engagement Global is financed by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The visit was also used to update the joint action programme which was drawn up during the project 50 Climate Partnerships by 2015. The document lists projects planned in four key areas: water management, environmental education, renewable energies/energy efficiency and waste management.



CHINA ROUND TABLE



Constructive talks at the China Round Table: (left to right) Karl-Heinz Gerriets, Yanxiu Du, Xiaohui Du, Jürgen Krogmann, Ina Gean, Oliver Pundt and Frank Marschhausen as well as Kai Bölle. Photo: City of Oldenburg

In December 2019, Oldenburg's Lord Mayor Jürgen Krogmann welcomed the new Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Hamburg, Xiaohui Du, as a guest of honour at the 13th China Round-Table Meeting. Du, who also visited the OFFIS Institute, described Oldenburg as a "wonderful, open, tolerant, tradition-conscious yet future-oriented and bold city".

This is how he expressed his vision of German-Chinese relations: "We need more dialogue and cooperation instead of isolation and protectionism". The focus at the 13th China Round Table with some 60 guests was on education. The examples presented were the relationship between the grammar school Altes Gymnasium Oldenburg (AGO) and its partner school in Xi'an as well as the Chinese



Participants from Oldenburg in the Qingdao Xin Xing Cup 2019: Karl-Heinz Gerriets and Joachim Ebel. Photo: City of Qingdao

language programme at the vocational school BBS Wechloy, which started up in the 2019/2020 academic year. There was also a fascinating insight into a trip taken by Karl-Heinz Gerriets and Joachim Ebel. The two athletes from Oldenburg took part in the Qingdao Xin Xing Cup tennis tournament in October 2019.

GRONINGEN-OLDENBURG-BREMEN

On 7 November 2019, the well-known trilateral meeting of experts took place for the first time under the title Trixpert Meeting in Groningen, our Dutch twin city. The topics discussed included hydrogen energy, digital services of the city administration and the Work 4.0 transformation in working methods. Six expert groups were formed from 60 employees of city administrations, universities, institutions and businesses. They discussed overarching topics such as cities and districts, digitalization, mobility and sustainability. Fact-finding excursions supplemented the talks.

FOURTH CONFERENCE OF 'MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIPS' WITH AFRICA



Discussion round: Darby Gounden (right). Photo: Patricia Kühfuss

Thanks to funding from Engagement Global and its Service Agency Communities in One World, two colleagues from Buffalo City were able to travel to Hanover and Oldenburg for working trips in September 2019.

The high-calibre programme of the partnership conference included a talk by the former Vice President of the Commission of the African Union, Erastus J. O. Mwencha, followed by an open discussion round. Darby Gounden, who is responsible for international relations in Buffalo City, also took part in the discussion.

In Oldenburg, the guests met up with representatives of OOWV, a project partner which presented plans for a cooperation project with South Africa. This forms the basis for developing new project ideas. In talks with local public transport provider VWG and the Traffic and Road Construction Department, the participants discussed possible cooperation projects with a focus on transport. The current Nakopa project (see page 4) shows that proper waste disposal and recycling can have a positive impact on the drinking water supply. To discuss this vital topic, the guests came together with representatives of the waste management company and talked about developments in Germany over the past few decades.





Bandshop NL speciaal in Wilhelm13. Photo: City of Oldenburg

THE POWER OF MUSIC

The Music School of the City of Oldenburg and the Vrijdag Music School of Groningen are united by a close partnership. In June 2019, four jazz bands from the Vrijdag Music School performed their Bandshop NL speciaal show in the Wilhelm 13 venue in Oldenburg. It was a varied programme of jazz music, song and improvisation.



Lord Mayor Jürgen Krogmann (right) welcomed the ensemble of Kingston's Rose Youth Theatre together with director Christian Firmbach (2nd from left) in the Town Hall. Photo: City of Oldenburg

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE UK ENCOUNTERS

upon Thames in October 2019. The ensemble of young people aged from 18 to 20 directed by Lucy Morrell performed the thriller The Creature: A Retelling of Frankenstein. The exchange programme with the Rose Youth Theatre: The youngsters took part in a joint workshop and a guided tour of the city, and also saw a performance of The Rocky Horror Show.



At the Promotiedagen 2019 (left to right) Karel Groen, Managing Director of the Ems Dollart Region, Dr. Bernhard Brons, President of the East Friesia and Papenburg Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Oldenburg's Lord Mayor Jürgen Krogmann and Koen Schuiling. Mayor of Groningen. Photo: Mario Rauch

OLDENBURG PLEIN

In November 2019, the networking trade fair Promotieologen took place in Groningen. For the first time, the No(o)rd Plein provided a joint presentation platform for the East Friesia/Papenburg region and the Ems-Dollart region and the "Oldenburg Plein" of the city's Business Development Agency and companies and institutions from Oldenburg.



Students from the Altes Gymnasium with their guests from Xi'an Middle School No. 89. Photo: Hauke-Christian Dittrich

SCHOOL EXCHANGE WITH XI'AN

In August 2019, Oldenburg's Mayor Christine Wolff and school director Frank Marschhausen (Altes Gymnasium Oldenburg) welcomed pupils from No. 89 Middle School in Xi'an as guests in Oldenburg. Soon afterwards, in early October 2019, 20 school students from Oldenburg paid a return visit in China.



The singers from Xi'an together with the Recorder Ensemble from Heilig Music School in the Great Hall of the Town Hall. Photo: City of Oldenburg

CHORAL MUSIC FROM XI'AN

The youth choir of the Xi'an School of Music, Art and Dance were invited to perform in Oldenburg in October 2019. The highlight of their three-day trip was a concert by the 18 students (aged from 7 to 12) together with the Recorder Ensemble of the Heilig Music School of Oldenburg. The event took place before a public audience in the Great Hall of the Town Hall



Lord Mayor Jürgen Krogmann was welcomed by Mayor Margaret Thompson (centre) and Chief Executive Ian Thomas. Photo: Citv of Oldenburg

NO EXIT DESPITE BREXIT

Even after Britain left the EU, we continued in 2019 to maintain close relations with our twin city Kingston upon Thames. During a three-day visit to the UK at the beginning of July 2019, Lord Mayor Jürgen Krogmann and the Head of UK Encounters, Bernd Hubl, met up with participants in the event series.



The joint concert by the shanty choirs from Sassnitz and Oldenburg. Photo: Shanty-Chor Oldenburg e. V.

SAILORS UNITED

For many years, the two shanty choirs from Oldenburg and Sasshitz (in the twin district Vorpommern-Rügen) have maintained a close friendship. The Oldenburg choir visited their friends in Vorpommern-Rügen in 2019. Together, they took a boat trip to the chalk cliffs, a walk around a treetop path and a guided tour of the island. What's more, the Shanty-Chor Oldenburg e. V. gave concerts on three days.



"A NEW START – ACROSS BORDERS"

In June 2019, our Mayor Petra Averbeck welcomed a Jewish-Arabic delegation as part of the OLMUN (Oldenburger Model United Nations). 13 school students from the Jewish Cabri Manor High School, the OFEK School and the Arabic school al-Shaykh Danun in Oldenburg's twin city Mateh Asher came to an official reception in the Old Town Hall.

REMEMBRANCE WALK

The most recent Remembrance Walk in commemoration of the deportation of Jews took place on 10 November 2019. It involved the largest group ever: 20 young people and four accompanying adults from our twin city of Mateh Asher. The event was organised by the "Oberschule Ofenerdiek" in cooperation with the Remembrance Walk project group. Music also played an important part, because the 12 to 18-year-old guests belong to three different ensembles: a flute orchestra, a choir and a band. During their stay in Germany, the young musicians were able to display their skills on two occasions. On 9 November they performed in the Oldenburg State Theatre and provided the music for the remembrance ceremony of the Jewish Community of Oldenburg. Another highlight was a performance at the German-Israeli Youth Conference in Berlin. The conference was opened by the Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Dr. Franziska Giffey, and the Israeli ambassador to Germany, Jeremy Issacharoff.

TRILATERAL EXCHANGE ON DIGITALISATION, MOBILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY



Committed to the trilateral exchange: (left to right) then-Mayor Peter den Oudsten (Groningen), Lord Mayor Jürgen Krogmann (Oldenburg) and then-Mayor Carsten Sieling (Bremen). Photo: Sascha Stüber

The trilateral exchange between Groningen, Bremen and Oldenburg continued in 2019, also at mayoral level. The three cities are committed to actively shaping digitalisation, new mobility and greater sustainability. They have ambitious objectives for improvements that will benefit the people and businesses in their cities. They aim to find and implement new, future-proof solutions in public services, offer intelligent mobility and accelerate economic development.

CHINESE DELEGATIONS VISITING OLDENBURG



Cooking lessons with the chefs from Xi'an at the BBS 3. Photo: City of Xi'an

In September 2019, two delegations visited Oldenburg to identify the scope for cooperation in vocational training. Four delegates from the City Archive of Qingdao visited the State Archive, the City Museum and the City Archive in Oldenburg. The other five delegates were representatives of various catering businesses, including two chefs from Xi'an: Yonggui Wang and Shirong Zhou.

The two prepared dishes from their home country, first for the CEO of the recruitment and training organisation BSB Deutschland, Ina Gean, then in the student hall of residence Huntemannstraße. The next day, students at the BBS 3 vocational school were treated to a cooking show. Also on the agenda was a talk with the Association for German-Chinese Friendship.



The members of the Chinese delegation with Christine Wolff (front, 2nd from left) on the stairs in the Old Town Hall, Photo: City of Oldenburg

In October 2019, a delegation of 13 vocational school directors from Xi'an attended a series of presentations about the German education system. They discussed what they had learned with representatives of the Office for Schools and Education, the Oldenburg Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the Employment Agency, the Chamber of Agriculture and BSB Deutschland. Another delegation from Xi'an, consisting of business leaders, found out about the work of the Technology and Startup Centre (TGO). During a meeting at the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the delegates talked with representatives of companies in Oldenburg.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS



PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT – SUPPORT FROM CHINA

Photo: Sascha Stüber

On 22 April 2020, the Lord Mayor Jürgen Krogmann was able to take two deliveries of protective equipment from China.

The first delivery, from a partner hospital in Dalian, consisted of 50,000 FFP2 and 5,000 N95 masks, 1,000 protective aprons and 1,000 pairs of goggles. It went to the medical personnel of the hospital Klinikum Oldenburg. Krogmann collected a further 20,000

Salaza

single-use masks from Oldenburg's twin city Xi'an from the city's Fire Station. "I want to express my deepest thanks for this support from China. It shows how well our relationship has developed. I have no doubt the two visits by delegations in 2016 and 2019 made a big difference. They helped cement above all many contacts in the medical field", said the Lord Mayor.

KEEPING MEMORIES ALIVE. ONLINE HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY.



Photo: City of Oldenburg

On the occasion of Holocaust Remembrance Day on 21 April 2020, our Lord Mayor Jürgen Krogmann took part in a video conference of the state president on the invitation of Oldenburg's twin city Mateh Asher.

Israel has been holding the Remembrance Day for the victims of the Holocaust on 21 April since 1951. However, the coronavirus crisis meant that things were different this year. Memorials and public squares were deserted, and the official ceremonies were broadcast by radio, TV and online. "I was glad to accept this invitation. Remembrance is possible anywhere. We can all help ensure history is not forgotten and keep the memory of the victims of National Socialism alive", said Krogmann.

WE ARE UN!TE.

Keeping relationships built up over years alive during the coronavirus crisis is a huge challenge. Before the virus emerged, there was a lively and creative dialogue between Oldenburg and our twin cities. Obvious signs of our ties were mutual invitations, trips, joint projects and activities planned and implemented. The personal contacts and constant exchanges formed a basis for our wide variety of international relations.

When the pandemic and its consequences hit, we needed a new kind of creativity to keep our friendships going through a time of restrictions on travel and personal contact. The city of Oldenburg and all its twin cities have faced up to this new challenge. And we have found good ways of continuing our dialogue across national borders. In today's digital world, we can use e-mails, phone calls, video and phone conferences to overcome difficult conditions. This means we can look forward to and plan a positive future. It's true that many joint projects have been put on ice and meetings postponed, but the intensity of our partnerships has not suffered. It has merely changed. We are reserving new dates, keeping each other informed about the situations in our respective countries and cities, swapping our experiences. And we're taking part in events such as the Holocaust Remembrance Day, even if only in virtual form.

There's no question that the impact of the coronavirus crisis is massive and affects us all. But the spirit of community and our ties of friendship have rarely been as strongly felt. Keeping friendships alive is easy in good times. But the quality of a relationship shows up especially in bad times. Oldenburg and our twin cities have found new ways of coping with a situation which is new for everybody. We will make the best of it, and above all we will pull together! This is a very positive aspect in these threatening times, and it shows that dialogue and solidarity are possible even when mobility is restricted.

This gives us hope and confidence for the future. And we're looking forward to rediscovering everything that unites us once the coronavirus has been defeated: the urge to get to know one another, learn from each other and maintain our dialogue. The pandemic is a challenge we will overcome together. Despite lockdowns, travel warnings, social restrictions. With great creativity, flexibility and commitment. We're proud of what we've achieved so far and we know we will get past the coronavirus crisis together. That's because we give each other support, strength, information and motivation. The team at international relations would like to thank everybody involved in our international relations.

UN!TE keeps us together. That goes for us in Oldenburg and the people in our twin cities. Please take care and stay healthy!



INTERVIEW

SMOOTHIES VS. ROSE-HIP TEA

OLDENBURG'S YOUTH HOSTEL - AN OUTSTANDING ENTERPRISE.



Photo: Tobias Frick

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Mr. Acquistapace, we're very impressed by Oldenburg's new youth hostel. The old image of the grumpy hostel director, unsweetened rose-hip tea out of stainless steel pots and shared bathrooms in the corridors bears no relation to today's reality. It feels more like a hip location in Berlin or Barcelona. What was the nicest compliment you heard when it opened?

It was from Stephan Weil, the Prime Minister of Lower Saxony. He said that if anybody had told him 40 years ago that one day a youth hostel would open in Oldenburg where the hostel director would appear in a suit and a green bow tie to show him around the building, he would have thought "I must have had too much rose-hip tea!" My twin goals are to make guests happy with our new hospitality concept and to offer them a comfortable stay. I love a challenge, and I believe standing still is falling behind.

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How would you describe yourself as a boss?

I think I'm a positive boss. Loyal and honest, somebody who likes to start his day with a cappuccino. I think all my employees enjoy coming to work. And I'm very aware that without the team, the business is nothing. The staff is the backbone of any company!

What do you expect from your employees?

Cleanliness, honesty, friendliness, creativity. Unfair employees who don't work well with others are bad for the company climate. If somebody has a qualification, that's great, but skills can also be learned. The nicest job application I've ever received was a photocopy of an ID card with four words: "I want to work." The woman who sent it still works here as a kitchen assistant and as a result she can finance her daughter's apprenticeship.

This is an equal opportunities company. What exactly does that mean?

Half of our employees have an impairment, which means that some things happen more slowly here. Whether a staff member has personal or general problems, or their health condition worsens: sometimes you have to alter the job to fit the employee, not the other way round. It's about understanding, patience, tolerance and acceptance. And our employees benefit from each other. Nobody feels that somebody else is doing less for the same wage. Communication, taking each other seriously, supporting each other, expressing pride and gratitude, these are my principles as a managing director in the German Youth Hostel Association.



What are your goals for the coming year?

We'd like to achieve about 40,000 overnight stays. We also want to implement our "Schirrmann's" hospitality concept in other youth hostels, ensure our team is happy and provide something special for our guests and Oldenburg itself.

What's more important to you, the hotel side of the job, the restaurant or events? I love being a host. Lots of things are part of that role, and it's great to be able to combine them all. As hotel and restaurant operators, we're often also actors. With the youth hostel, we have everything under



What's your tip for companies thinking about employing people with disabilities?

Be bold, not afraid! Just do it instead of umming and ahing. Accept a slower pace. Working with people who wouldn't get a job in another company opens your heart and nourishes your soul. The pride we see in the eyes of our disabled employees is the greatest reward imaginable for our efforts. We're supported here by various bodies such as the Office for Participation and Social Affairs and the charity "Aktion Mensch" as well as the Employment Office.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?

I hope I'll still be in Oldenburg proudly working in the youth hostel. We're innovative and our vision is to embody values that are increasingly important today! I want to foster a sense of community. I don't just do things to please others. It's about authenticity. I have to do what I believe in, and hopefully also what my husband and children appreciate!



Photo: Björn Reschabek

Photo: Björn Reschabek

one roof. It's a good feeling not to constantly strive to be better, faster, bigger. You can't buy genuine hospitality with money. We also have a responsibility to run the business in a resource-friendly way.

What's your favourite youth hostel (apart from your own)?

The one in Neuharlingersiel, in our Unterweser-Ems DJH association. I go there with my family a lot. And we love it!

WiFi instead of walking, smoothies instead of sarnies, comfort instead of campsite atmosphere. What's changed in

people's expectations of a youth hostel? We adjust to meet the demands of our guests. If we don't keep up, we won't have a future. Our hallmark quality is expressed in our mission statement "Experience community". Especially during the pandemic, this is more important than ever. With our new concept in Oldenburg, we're once again emphasising our focus on community. The legal requirements have changed. Now groups can no longer do the washing up or make tea for themselves, and serving meals to your fellow students isn't possible either. I hope I'll be able to continue the tradition of having guests change their own sheets for a long time to come. It's great to see schoolkids, other guests and locals get together at our fireplace and talk to each other instead of using social media. Here, they speak face-to-face instead of



Photo: Jonas Klünemann

by text message. They go to concerts without filming everything on their smartphones, which they'll never watch afterwards anyway. After an event in the Weser-Ems-Halle, they can drink a Schirrmann's together in the youth hostel and talk about what they've seen. We make school trips into community adventures. The kids learn how to build a go-cart, then race against each other. At the same time, we have the technical infrastructure so that everybody can charge their phones or tablets anywhere in the building. If you stay in our youth hostel, you find out for yourself what the weather's like outside rather than staring at a screen to see what's happening elsewhere

Photo: Björn Reschabek



Opened: October 2019 Location: Near the EWE-Arena and the central station Annual guest numbers: up to 40,000 Employees: 50 Highlights: Five conference and seminar rooms,

spacious lounge and café - bar - bistro "Schirrmann's", wide range of cultural and sporting venues nearby, all rooms with en-suite bathroom

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

INTERNATIONAL CITY CYCLING TOUR 2020

Cyclists from Oldenburg who took part in the CITY CYCLING TOUR 2020 pedalled not only for the environment and their own fitness, but also to raise money for charities. It was the third time the city of Oldenburg took part, with teams inspired by the aim of enjoying the exercise and supporting good causes. The idea was to travel as many kilometres as possible by bike – whether for work or leisure – during the campaign period from 6 to 26 September. Anybody who lived or worked in Oldenburg or was a member of an Oldenburg club, school or university was eligible.

Cycling for a good cause

There was an extra incentive for cyclists to increase the number of kilometres clocked up in 2020: The distances covered were added up to take the participants on a virtual bike tour to Oldenburg's twin cities. The journey was divided into five legs. For every leg accomplished, sponsors donated € 1,000 to one of a range of charities. Pedalling for donations boosted motivation and made the challenge even more fun. It wasn't just about exercise, but about cycling for a good cause.



Graphic: OTM/Verena Brandt

Ten fictitious cyclists set out on the tour to the twin cities. They needed to ride a total of 473,200 kilometres. The participants were motivated to complete the various legs not only to generate donations, but also to beat the result for 2019 – 343,766 kilometres.

They were quite successful, too, with a final total of 511,397 kilometres.

Leg 1: Oldenburg – Cholet – Kingston upon Thames – Groningen – Høje-Taastrup – District of Vorpommern-Rügen – Makhachkala = 63,400 km

Leg 2: Makhachkala – Xi'an – Qingdao = 88,200 km Leg 3: Qingdao – District of Mateh Asher = 94,000 km Leg 4: District of Mateh Asher – Buffalo City = 97,600 km Leg 5: Buffalo City – Oldenburg = 130,000 km

MEINZWILLING.COM

Très bon! The partnership between the cities of Oldenburg and Cholet in France is moving up to the next level. The twin cities have been cultivating their friendship since 1985. Now they are embracing the digital age: Together, they have developed the website "MeinZwilling.com" (MyTwin) which provides an online platform where people from Oldenburg and Cholet can get together.

After logging on to the password-protected site, users can find people with similar interests in their twin city. First, you complete your profile with details of your interests, job or language skills. Then the system compares registered users to find a "twin" you can converse with via the internal network. The free service is available to individuals, families, clubs and schools.



Irgendwo in Cholet... hat jemand die gleichen Interessen, Träume, Ideen wie du

Source: City of Oldenburg

