stumbled across Ariès' essay toward the end of my own work and reflected on that timing. Though an early reading of his paper would have hastened the development of my own broader perspective, I was spared the inherent pessimism in his analysis.

The bulk of social scientific writing in the area of informal public gathering places consists of ethnographic descriptions that await integration into more abstract and analytical efforts addressing the place and function of these centers of the informal public life of the society. Sociologists may ask themselves why so little has been done in this area since Georg Simmel's brief essay on sociability over half a century ago.

Finally, I would suggest to colleagues that the possibilities for cross-cultural research into the quality of informal public life seem exciting. The most useful and pertinent data are always within the public domain, and the invitation to foreign travel should require little encouragement. Whether the present effort serves to guide such efforts or merely encourage them makes no difference. The important thing is that this research be conducted, if only to help our nation reinstitute the kind of human association essential to all democracies.

Preface to the Second Edition

AS THE ORIGINAL preface accomplishes the usual purpose of such prolusions, the second affords the author the luxury of choice. Though it is tempting to recount the many and varied experiences, the rich flow of correspondence, and the kindred spirits met as a result of the publication of *The Great Good Place* six years ago, the space allotted here may be more usefully employed.

This second preface is devoted to those readers who have more than a passing interest in the concerns this book addresses. It is primarily for those who wish to learn more and do more in behalf of community, public conversation, and civicism. It is for those who believe in a public life and the need to restore it.

Two brief additions will be developed here, both of which should enhance the utility of the book. First, I will make suggestions for additional reading. Second, I will offer a checklist of the various community-building functions of "great good places" which may be quickly reviewed and assessed against the strengths and deficiencies of any particular neighborhood or municipality. Some of these are developed at greater length in the text proper; some are introduced here for the first time.

In the brief period since *The Great Good Place* was published, many books have appeared with similar themes. America seems to be undergoing a massive reassessment. In the simplest terms, we got where we wanted to go but now we aren't happy about where we are. We have

become a suburban nation—the only one in the world. Our migration from both the inner cities and the rural hinterland was, as Lewis Mumford once put it, "a collective effort to live a private life." We aimed for comfort and well-stocked homes and freedom from uncomfortable interaction and the obligations of citizenship. We succeeded.

As if to seal our fate, zoning ordinances were copied and enforced all over the land, prohibiting the stuff of community from intrusion into residential areas. In the subdivisions of post-World War II America, there is nothing to walk to and no place to gather. The physical staging virtually ensures immunity from community.

The preferred and ubiquitous mode of urban development is hostile to both walking and talking. In walking, people become part of their terrain; they meet others; they become custodians of their neighborhoods. In talking, people get to know one another; they find and create their common interests and realize the collective abilities essential to community and democracy.

It is from this perspective, this sense of the terrible costs of suburban development as we've managed it, that much of my reading and writing takes direction. Before publication of this book, I found my kindred spirits almost entirely in the books they wrote, and I am pleased to report that the present decade is witness to an increasing number of volumes having to do with our subject.

My recommendations for additional reading are subjective and incomplete. They consist of the men and women who have had most influence on me and whose books, regardless of publication date, seem to me to have great contemporary relevance.

I could start with none other than Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* For all the consternation she caused within architectural and planning circles, she has done a tremendous service for us all. One marvels at both the depth and quantity of her insights. Well within the Jacobs' tradition and appearing the same year as my contribution was Roberta Gratz's *The Living City.* Gratz's book contrasts grass roots successes at rebuilding neighborhoods with the disasters wrought by "urban renewal."

Victor Gruen's *The Heart of Our Cities* is still a book worth not only owning but using as a reference work for all aspects of urban and neighborhood development. Gruen is the man who conceived and planned our nation's first covered shopping mall. He came to reject the designation, "father of malling" because his plan was stripped down to commercialism only. He had envisioned a true community center.

Another volume I've nearly worn out is a brief and very readable little book by Wolf Von Eckardt entitled *Back to the Drawing Board.* Like Gruen, Von Eckardt is an advocate of citizen participation in planning and well understands that that can happen only at the neighborhood level.

The best description I've found on what we can learn from the old world is Bernard Rudofsky's *Streets for People;* a richly illustrated and detailed volume on the architectural requirements of a thriving public life. It is fittingly dedicated to "The Unknown Pedestrian" and not one of its scores of illustrations bears any resemblance to our subdivisions.

What almost amounts to a new genre of books are those appearing in response to the "places rated" volumes appearing in the 1980s. Those earlier books ranked cities according to comparative numerical data on health, crime, education, etc. Recognizing that strict adherence to such criteria could lead one to take up residence in "Anywhere, USA," more recent authors have intruded a most relevant question: But is it an interesting place to live?

Mark Cramer's *Funkytowns USA* and Terry Pindell's *A Good Place to Live* are welcome contrasts to the census-based, scoresheet analyses. Pindell treats the dozen or so best places in the U.S. that he's ever heard about in considerable depth. And he writes well; one almost feels as though he or she has been along on the trips. Cramer's "Funkytowns" covers many more towns and cities and, as one reviewer suggested, it should be placed in the glove compartments of all rental cars.

Philip Langdon's *A Better Place to Live* is a painstaking examination of how to "retrofit" American suburbs and when we come to the necessary matter of re-writing the building and zoning codes, this book should be one of the primers. Peter Katz's *The New Urbanism* details and illustrates two dozen developments and re-developments. It represents our architects' best attempts at recreating community. A closing essay (an Afterword) by Vince Scully deserves careful attention.

Recently appearing and already in its second printing is Richard Sexton's *Parallel Utopias* which looks deeply into the thinking behind, and execution of, two notable attempts at creating community today. Seaside, Florida (based on an urban model despite its location) and Sea Ranch, California (based on the model of a rural community) are closely

examined. Sexton is a first-rate photographer who illustrates as well as he explains in this book.

A volume which catches everyone's attention when, on my trips, I show it around is David Sucher's *City Comforts.* Contained herein are many suggestions, all photographically-illustrated, as to "minor surgery" and modest additions which combine to make life out in the public domain more enticing, more comfortable, and more livable.

The expert in this sort of thing, of course, is William H. Whyte, and if his larger tome *City* seems a bit formidable, the small and highly illustrated *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* will certainly seduce the reader into more of Whyte's research which has been done with exceeding care. Many urban centers have been revitalized in adherence to what Whyte has been able to report.

The political importance of "great good places" is wonderfully documented in a book by Sara Evans and Harry Boyte entitled *Free Spaces.* The writers argue convincingly that such places became much more important after industrialization separated home and the workplace and that they serve to preserve the peoples' democracy against the growing control of both government and the corporations.

Christopher Lasch's *The Revolt of the Elites* discusses the "civic arts" and the art of argument in addition to its main theme—that America's professional and managerial elites have little interest in the broad middle class of our society and have weak ties to nation and place. Their interest in a global economy and their "tourist's attitude" toward place give us cause to both regret and combat the control they have over the rest of us.

As public life is populated with strangers more than ever before; as strangers frighten us more than ever before; and as communities nonetheless depend upon the successful integration of strangers, books about them are also recommended. Lyn Lofland's *A World of Strangers* has become a modern classic. Michael Ignatieff's *The Needs of Strangers* is thought-provoking, and Parker Palmer's *The Company of Strangers* is a pleasure to read.

Before moving to the second part of this preface, there is another kind of reading, just now gathering momentum, that will be of special interest to those concerned with public life. I refer to "civic journalism," or "community journalism," or "citizen journalism," as it is variously called. Though its precise goals and *modus operandi* are still being

debated, there is a general consensus that greater citizen involvment is the *desideratum.*

Readers may expect that newspapers will encourage citizen participation in most aspects of community development; that more "level" heads will be invited to present more rational and moderate discussion; that reporting will go beyond mere events and present developments against a background of trends and patterns. Developments and proposals will increasingly be presented in context. Newspapers are expected to be less in league with politicians and the business community than in the past, and more with a citizenry which is trying to "live good lives in good cities."

The reasons for this shift in print journalism are many. Suffice it to note here that there is reason to rejoice in the fact that one of our institutions is moving away from the professional elitism which ill-serves the citizens of a democracy. As newspapers begin to speak more to ordinary citizens, so also will they more often listen to them.

As indicated, the remainder of this discussion will be devoted to the community-building functions which "great good places" typically perform. Most often I refer to such places as "third places" (after home, first, and workplace, second) and these are informal public gathering places. These places serve community best to the extent that they are *inclusive* and *local.*

The first and most important function of third places is that of uniting the neighborhood. In many communities, the post office served this function well when everyone had a mailbox there; when everybody had to walk or drive to it; and it was kept open, by law, twenty-four hours a day. Though there was no seating, it was a place where people met and conversed, at least briefly, with one another.

Drug stores also brought nearly everyone into contact with everyone else in the course of the average week or month. They did this because they offered so many things, beyond pharmaceuticals, that people needed. Also, they typically enjoyed a good (central) location in the town or neighborhood.

Places such as these, which serve virtually everybody, soon create an environment in which everybody knows just about everybody. In most cases, it cannot be said that everyone, or even a majority, will *like* everybody else. It is, however, important to know everyone, to know how they variously add to and subtract from the general welfare; to know

what they can contribute in the face of various problems or crises, and to learn to be at ease with everyone in the neighborhood irrespective of how one *feels* about them. A third place is a "mixer."

Assimilation is a function to which third places are well-suited. They serve as "Ports of Entry" for visitors and as places where newcomers may be introduced to many of their predecessors. Andres Duany jokes about the man who spent two days trying to find the resident of a subdivision. His anecdote points up the fact that our postwar residential areas are extremely hostile to strangers, outsiders, and new residents of the area. The streets are typically vacant and there are no local commercial establishments where one might stop to get directions.

There is considerable irony here. Once America became the high mobility society it now is, with about twenty percent of the population changing residence every year, one might have thought that neighborhoods would have been designed so that people could be integrated quickly and easily. What actually happened, however, was quite the opposite. The more people moved about, or were moved about by the companies that employed them, the more difficult it became to penetrate the nation's residential areas.

The hardships involved, and they are many, are not incurred by the newcomers alone. The city and the neighborhood suffer as well when there is a failure to integrate newcomers and enlist their good services to the betterment of community life.

A one-visit Welcome Wagon is a poor substitute for the friendly tavern or coffee-counter where one is *always* welcome. The "neutral ground" (space upon which one is not burdened by the role of host or guest) of third places offers the great ease of association so important to community life. People may come and go just when they please and are beholden to no one. Eventually one meets or otherwise learns about everyone in the neighborhood.

In this respect, third places also serve as "sorting areas." The broad scale association which they provide ultimately leads to the stuff of "sociometrics." That is, people find that they very much like certain people and dislike others. They find people with similar interests, and they find people whose interests aren't similar but are interesting nonetheless. Third places often serve to bring together for the first time, people who will create other forms of association later on.

dorms?

In true communities there are collective accomplishments. People work together and cooperate with one another to do things which individuals cannot do alone. Though much of this kind of effort is informal, it nonetheless requires a general understanding of who can do what; of the skills, abilities and attitudes of those in the neighborhood. Third places serve to sort people according to their potential usefullness in collective undertakings.

Related to this is the third place's function as a staging area. In time of local crisis, people typically find it necessary to help themselves as much or more than they are helped by municipal agencies. Severe storms and other crises often require a gathering and mobilization of local citizens for the purpose of helping one another. But where? In the aftermath of hurricane Andrew in South Florida not long ago, many people emerged from the destruction feeling that need to gather with others to find out how severe and extensive the damage; to find out what was being done; to see how they could help and/or get help—but for most there was no place to assemble. Careful zoning had denied these people their "third places."

Third places also provide those whom Jane Jacobs called "public characters." These are people who know everybody in the neighborhood and who care about the neighborhood. These are usually store owners or operators who "keep an eye" on what's happening in the neighborhood. These are the people who alert parents about what their kids sometimes "get into" before it is necessary for the police to do so. These are also the people likely to give newcomers their first welcome to the area.

Suburban zoning has replaced "public characters" with the retailers and their employees in the malls and out on the strips. The chains in which these people work thrive by killing off local commercial establishments, and the people who operate the chains do nothing for the community in the way that "public characters" do.

In the negatively-zoned subdivision, there rarely emerges a "public character," for the means by which people might come to know everyone are absent. If the developer's habit of calling a house a "home" is something of a stretch, it doesn't compare with that of calling a subdivision a "community," for that is precisely what it is *not*.

Among the noblest of third place functions, rarely realized anywhere anymore, is that of bringing youth and adults together in relaxed en-

joyment. The rampant hostility and misunderstanding between the generations, adult estrangement from and fear of youth, the increasing violence among youth—these and youth-related problems all have a common genesis and it is the increasing segregation of youth from adults in American society.

Raising children was easier when the parents got a lot of help from others in the neighborhood who knew the kids and not only kept an eye on them but generally enjoyed having them around. The ways in which older and younger generations teased, cajoled, chided and amused one another have almost passed from memory now, as have the lessons learned, the examples set, and the local figures admired.

With so many mothers now absent from the home, it is all the more regrettable that the family is so weakly connected (if connected at all) to the other people in the neighborhood. Where third places exist within residential neighborhoods, and are claimed by all, they remain among the very few places where the generations still enjoy one another's company.

Third places serve the elderly as well. It is unfortunate that so many old and retired people find it desireable to make a final migration to some "senior citizen community." It is regrettable that the areas in which they worked and raised children have so little to offer them, so few means of keeping them connected to neighborhood and community.

This book has no chapter on the elderly and the retired. There was the constraint of length and I opted for a chapter on children based on my reasoning that children are ill-equipped and weakly positioned to speak for themselves.

There should be a chapter on the older generation, of course, and not just for their sake. Third places are typically places of business and their slow periods benefit from retired people who can fill the booths and chairs when others are at work or in school. Furthermore, retired people are generally more sociable and more civilized. No longer grubbing for a living, they come to place more value on good conversation, on enjoying people just for the company they offer.

It escapes me right now, who first wrote that urban planning which meets the needs of children and the elderly will be nice for everybody, but truer words are rarely written. Several years ago, I participated in an "Evaluation Study" of a program for retired people in a Minnesota

town of barely 7,000 people. The program was contained, for the most part, in the basements of two of the town's larger churches.

Participation was modest in this program and enthusiasm was not high. I was there a full three days and couldn't figure out the purpose, though everyone I talked with insisted that something important was being done "for the elderly." The fourth day began with a meeting in the conference room of the town's largest bank. When the meeting adjourned, I held back and stepped in front of our host as he was about to leave. With just the two of us present, I confronted him with, "What the heck is this all about?" Taken off guard, he blurted, "Well, we had to get them off the street." The important thing being done "for" the elderly was getting them out of the way much as they did with the homeless when Atlanta hosted the Olympics.

These older folks, of course, had looked forward to sitting along the sidewalks in fair weather and to lingering at the lunch and coffee shops and taverns. Here were people most intent upon enjoying community; who now had time to enjoy communal association. The "boosters" however, were intent on denying them these rewards. There was no appreciation of that which the oldest generation contributes to communities which provide a place for them.

Third places provide a means for retired people to remain in contact with those still working and, in the best instances, for the oldest generation to associate with the youngest.

The plight of the elderly and those on fixed incomes generally, points up another important function of third places and it is that performed by all "mutual aid societies." In the convivial atmosphere of third places, people get to know one another and to like one another and then to care for one another. When people care for one another, they take an interest in their welfare; and this is a vastly superior form of welfare than that obtained by governmental programs. It is based on mutual consent, genuine empathy, and real understanding of peoples' situations. Nobody is a "case."

Third place regulars "do for one another," as they would for blood relatives and old friends. They give things they no longer need; they loan items they still want; they do what they can to relieve hardship when it befalls "one of the gang." When someone doesn't "show" for a couple of days, somebody goes around to check on them.

The financial benefits in all of this are considerable. Somebody in

the group fixes lawn-mowers. Someone else can handle plumbing and appliances, or knows who does it at considerable savings. Money-saving advice is forthcoming from somebody in the group who has confronted a given problem earlier on. Sometimes, alas, when the group's collective resources are found wanting, the individual is advised, "Get out your pocketbook." Often, however, that is not necessary.

It was in the first "Crocodile Dundee" movie, I believe, that our protagonist was surprised to hear that somebody paid a psychiatrist to listen to his or her troubles. "That's what mates are for!" was, I think, his response. The group support inherent in third place camaraderie, I'm convinced, also saves many people the expense of a "professional caregiver."

This union of friends suggests another function of the third place. An individual can have many friends and engage them often *only* if there is a place he or she can visit daily and which plays host to their meetings.

Friends met in numbers create something of a festive mood for all. Interaction is relatively easy as one is required to contribute only his or her "share" of the time. Laughter is frequent where many friends gather. In their company, the competitive successes and the enervating stresses of the mundane world are "put on hold."

Amid this lengthy enumeration of third place functions, it may be well to point out that the fundamental motivation for this kind of belonging is neither personal advantage nor civic duty. The basic motivation; that which draws people back time and again is *fun*. It is a lamentable fact that so many Americans, when they see the "gang" heavily engaged in "solving the problems of the world" consider them merely to be frivolously wasting time.

The "fun" function of third places is better seen, perhaps, as the entertainment function. That entertainment has deteriorated almost entirely into an industry in the United States is a great pity. We take it passively; we take it in isolation; and we frequently find it boring.

In third places, the entertainment is provided by the people themselves. The sustaining activity is conversation which is variously passionate and light-hearted, serious and witty, informative and silly. And in the course of it, acquaintances become personalities and personalities become true characters—unique in the whole world and each adding richness to our lives.

The major alternative to participatory entertainment is television which really isn't interesting enough to garner all the blame heaped upon it. The critics usually overlook the lack of alternatives to this medium. How many Americans having "surfed" all the channels and, bored by it all, wouldn't like to slip on a jacket and walk down to the corner and have a cold one with the neighbors? Ah, but we've made sure there's nothing on the corner but another private residence . . . indeed, nothing at all within easy walking distance.

We might remind ourselves of the essence of the so-called *joie de vivre* ("joy in living") cultures. That essence is their ability to entertain themselves in an abundance of public places where they may do so daily and at little cost and no discomfort. We may sneer at their simple ways; at their lack of technological gadgetry; and at the fact that their dwellings are more humble than ours. But when all is said and done—they enjoyed life and gave human relationships higher priority than making a buck.

America's growing problem of automobile congestion suggests a related function of third places—where *locally* situated. A third place to which one may walk allows people to "get out of the house" without getting into a car and contributing to traffic congestion. Unfortunately, our census takers log only the commuting use of our roadways. Even casual attention to local driving conditions will reveal that our roads are crowded during most daylight hours and not just at "rush" hours.

Though we live in as large and as well-stocked houses as we can afford, there is frequent need to escape from them. The only real means for most is by car and the only realistic escapes for most is the malls and the strips where they are expected to spend their consumer dollars. Americans spend three to four times as much time shopping as Europeans and much, if not most, of the difference has to do with a lack of alternatives. We have denied ourselves the means of friendly and cost-free association in our neighborhoods. In any total analysis, Walmart and McDonalds are much more expensive than we might imagine.

At the risk of sounding mystical, I will contend that nothing contributes as much to one's sense of belonging to a community as much as "membership" in a third place. It does more than membership in a dozen formal organizations. Why this should be so is not entirely mysterious. It has to do with surviving and, indeed, *thriving* in a "fair game" atmosphere.

Whereas formal organizations typically bring together the like-minded and similarly-interested, third places are highly inclusive by comparison. By "fair game," we mean that in such places the individual may be approached by anyone and is expected to give-and-take in conversation with civility and good humor. Many people find this daunting and many fans of the internet are those who find the communication it affords much "safer."

Those who manage to "get on with one and all" count it a matter of pride, both for themselves and for the group itself. They often marvel at the "strange collection" of people with whom they have found a joyful place. This feeling of belonging probably impresses itself upon those who have third places more so now than in the past. Not only is postwar housing more privatized, it is also more segregated than earlier. Most people these days don't grow up in a "vertical community" but in one narrowly segregated by income and demographics. Their residential experience is based on a thin, horizontal slice of society. Third places, for those who have them nowadays, must seem wonderfully inclusive indeed.

Three more functions of third places seem to me worthy of introduction here, and these are not less important as might be indicated by their late mention. Third places are political fora of great importance. In many countries the emergent solidarity of labor owed strictly to the profusion of cafés in which the workers discussed their common problems, realized their collective strength, and planned their strikes and other strategies. Though many credit an "enlightened" congress with the anti-segregation laws of the sixties, none of it would have happened but for prior assembly in black churches all over the South.

It is not difficult to understand why coffeehouses came under attack by government leaders in England, in Scandinavia, and in Saudi Arabia at various points in history. It was in the coffeehouses where people congregated and often, in their discussions, found fault with the countries' rulers.

Survey after survey finds political literacy low in America. People don't know who serves in the president's cabinet; they don't know who their representatives are; they wouldn't sign our Bill of Rights if presented to them as a petition, etc., etc. As Christopher Lasch recently remarked: Why should they know these things? Why should anyone gather information they never get to use? At a more basic level what

these surveys show is a lack of involving discussion and that, in turn, suggests that we've lost many, if not most, of our third places—the political forum of the common man.

Third places also serve as intellectual fora. Politics is not the only important subject discussed in third places. Philosophy, geography, urban development, psychology, history and a great many others are entertained. Everyone is, to some degree, an intellectual and third place regulars more so than most because they air their notions in front of critics.

Unfortunately, we too often think of intellectualism in bookish terms or as belonging to those with credentials. Almost everyone, however, reflects upon life and society's problems. Self-appointed elites may deride "cracker barrel philosophy" but the very term suggests that "ordinary" people think and that they do so in company with their fellow man.

To the outsider, the notion that third place regulars "think alike" is often a tempting summary, but it is wrong. "Membership" in third place groups depends upon coming to terms with people who, on certain subjects, are "out of their minds"—which is to say one doesn't agree with them. Membership also means that sometimes, one's pet ideas don't go over with the group. They don't agree. Unlike that association based on ideology or "political correctness," or scapegoating, one's ideas don't "cost you" in third place gatherings. One's acceptance in such circles depends one's character and one's ability to liven the group—but not on specific notions. One intrudes an idea and the others may nod, or groan, or frown, or laugh but nothing is lost. It's all rather like a good classroom.

Finally, third places may serve as offices. In some kinds of transactions, it is better that neither party be on his or her "home ground" but in some neutral corner, preferably a comfortable and informal one. I was amused, a few years ago, that some of the teachers in a school system resented the fact that the principal spent a portion of almost every day at a local restaurant. He seemed, in their eyes, to be taking advantage of his office. In fact, however, he met a good many parents in that restaurant; parents who didn't have to dress up and spend time waiting in his outer office. He met parents whom he might not have seen otherwise.

Some people are most "locatable" in their third places. It's the only place they are certain to visit on any given day and consequently, it's

the best place to "catch" them. I have noticed in the academic world, that many of us maintain contact with those who've retired from the system, not on the campus, but in those third places we both visit.

The third place as "office" is more popular in many other cultures than in the United States where a bureaucratic mentality is more pervasive. In the near and far east, many entrepreneurs are too poor to own offices of their own and use public eating or drinking places, even stating so on their business cards. In Ireland, where everybody deemed to have good sense frequents the pubs, pubs quite naturally are often used as informal offices. It is a practice to be encouraged if for no other reason than the equality it establishes between the parties.

That concludes this account of third place functions which I have offered to enhance the reader's understanding of their potential for community building and which groups may use in considering which of these functions seem important to their neighborhoods and where said functions might be performed.

I should like to close with a nod to those who disagree with that which I seem to be promoting, and indeed am. There are those who "like their privacy" and who consider neighborhoods in which people know one another to be something of an anachronism.

The breed is not new. Even before shopping became a way of life and long before television and other modes of home entertainment became popular, there were people who felt the same way. In my hometown, back in the forties and fifties, when Main Street was lively and filled with people all day long; when we had an abundance of places, both indoors and out, to enjoy one another's company, there were those who never did. And when our little town of about 700 played host to some 10,000 a day during festival time, those same people never took part—not in the preparation, nor the enjoyment.

This, we must understand, is as it should be. The first requirement of a good community is that one need not be a member of it. Public life, civicism, a vital community—these concepts are lost on many and it is surprising that they are not lost on more of us. As I indicated at the outset, this escape from community has been our collective goal for the past several decades.

The response to such people should be polite but firm. They have the right not to assume the responsibilities of a community life; the option not to expend the time and energy that the restoration of public

life will require. But it ill behooves them to attempt to frustrate the rest of us in the name of "progress" or whatever rationale they embrace in defense of their life style preferences. Those who choose not to participate always have that choice but those of us who yearn for a public life and for life on the streets of our neighborhoods have been deprived. And we, I think, have the better case.

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