

The City at Stake: “Stakeholder Mapping” The City

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Abstract

Studies of the city have been addressed from many different approaches such as law, political science, art history and public administration, in which the economic, political and legal status of the city have played a major role. However, a new agenda for conceptualizing the city has emerged, in which the city assumes new roles. By using stakeholder theory as a framework for conceptualizing the city, we argue that the city assumes a political-economic agenda-setting role as well as providing a stage for identity constructions and relational performances for consumers, organizations, the media, politicians and other stakeholders. Stakeholder theory allows us to conceptualize the city as being constituted by stakes and relationships between stakeholders which are approached from three analytical positions (modern, postmodern and hypermodern, respectively), thereby allowing us to grasp different stakes and types of relationships, ranging from functional and contractual relationships to individualized and emotionally driven or more non-committal and fluid forms of relationships. In order to support and illustrate the analytical potentials of our framework for conceptualizing urban living, we introduce a project which aims to turn the city of Aarhus into a CO₂-neutral city by the year 2030, entitled Aarhus CO₂030. We conclude that applying stakeholder theory to a hyper-complex organization such as a city opens up for a reconceptualization of the city as a web of stakes and stakeholder relations. Stakeholder theory contributes to a nuanced and elaborate understanding of the urban complexity and web of both enforced and voluntary relationships as well as the different types of relationships that characterize urban life.

Keywords: Stakeholder theory, concepts of the city, relationship, and climate change

Introduction

In the glow of post- and hypermodernity (Lipovetsky 2005; Maffesoli 1996), an alternative agenda for conceptualizing the city has emerged which is sensitive to the dynamics and participatory interchanges and relations between citizens and which supplements the notion of formalized city structures with a conception of the city as an emotional space for identity construction and social scene for image performance, at both organizational and individual level.

In this article we will pursue a dynamic approach to the city as we reconceptualize urban living as interactions and relations between stakeholders. Thus, the article is built upon the premise that cities and organizations can be perceived as parallel entities. Our mission is not to establish a model for managing the city within a frame of public governance, but to establish a framework for understanding the city as a dynamic space for constructions, negotiations and the performance of organizational and individual identity and image.

Based on a theoretical study of stakeholder theory within a modern, postmodern and hypermodern perspective respectively, we reconceptualize the city as a complex form of organization constituted by a diversity of relationships and relational formations. This is illustrated by the use of a climate campaign aimed at neutralizing CO₂ levels that is being conducted by the Municipality of Aarhus, entitled Aarhus CO2030. Consequently, the article presents a conceptual stakeholder map of the city which accounts for the complexities and complementarities of stakes and relations in urban life.

The purpose of the article is two-fold: theoretically, it unfolds, differentiates and discusses different approaches to stakeholder theory, with the purpose of contributing to a more detailed understanding of the different types and forms of relationship, their construction and dynamics. Conceptually, the overall purpose of the article is to reconceptualize the city as a complex form of organization, creating insight into urban living as a complex web of relationships.

Stakeholder theory is studied from three positions: a modern, postmodern and hypermodern position. We do not claim that these positions have ontological status in the city; they are merely analytical constructs, allowing us to build an epistemological frame of thoughts for conceptualizing different aspects of the city and discursively construct different proportions of urban life. Hence, these perspectives can be seen as analytical keys for unlocking the complexity and multi-relational dimensions of the city.

The article follows a spiraling approach which synergizes theoretical constructs with conceptual case illustrations, resulting in the generation of ideas and opening of new entries to be continuously explored.

In the following we frame the city within the perspective of urban governance and recent conceptualizations of the city. We account for the theoretical premises

for applying stakeholder theory to a city setting, rooting the argument in the idea of the marketization of the city (e.g. Landry 2000) and new public management theory (e.g. Horton 2006; Pollitt & Bouckaert 2000).

Urban Governance

Urban studies have long paved the way for economic, social and cultural studies of the city and how to approach urban spaces from a planning and management perspective (e.g. Graham & Healey 1999; Healey 2004; Healey 2006a & Healey 2006b; Florida 2005; Landry 2000 & 2006; Simpson & Kelly 2008). According to the classical approach of urban studies, spaces of the city are conceived from a centric perspective and the city is conceptualized as a “container”. Places and cities are approached from an instrumental perspective as single, integrated, unitary and material objects that can be managed by using physical and locational variables (Graham & Healey 1999: 624). This conception of the city goes back to the beginning of the 20th century with the appearance of the “Old Chicago School of Urbanism” (Simpson & Kelly 2008: 218). However, while the centric view of the city still leaves traces, it is widely acknowledged that global cities and urban life today call for new descriptions and models in order to understand and account for the functioning of cities and spaces in our time (Simpson & Kelly 2008: 219). In 2001 the “New Chicago School” was founded by urban scholars who approach urbanism in the light of the large-scale structural changes and globalization of the 21st century. Hence the rational, modern approach to urban planning and governance is replaced by a relational approach to the study and governance of cities and places. Rather than being regarded as centric unities within geographical boundaries, cities and places are seen as socially constructed, non-contiguous, diverse, dynamic and superimposed networks of social relations and understandings (Graham & Healey 1999: 628). Consequently, it is no longer possible to consider the city as a bounded, isolated and unitary economy that can be governed with traditional sectorial planning instruments. Only by establishing horizontal collaborative urban planning models that generate synergies between established and emerging stakeholder interests in the city can urban governors and city planners respond to the complexity of urban and regional dynamics. Urban governance hence relies on a broad and multiple conception of citizens and stakeholders involving actors not only from state and regional government bodies, but from businesses, NGOs, teaching and research institutions, the media and other relevant stakeholders, including nature and environmental constructs. As claimed by Healey, “strategy making with an appreciation of “relational complexity” demands a capacity to “see,” “hear”, “feel”, and “read” the multiple dynamics of a place in a way which can identify just those issues which need collective attention through a focus on place qualities” (Healey 2006a: 542). Academic interest in the

city has literally been vitalized as geographical borders have dissolved into urban living.

As demonstrated above, the shift from a centric conceptualization of the city towards a more dynamic, fluid and relational understanding of the city has gained ground in urban studies. From being a simple public administration planning activity, urban development and innovation has become a highly sophisticated strategic governance issue based on organizational innovation, business management and interorganizational networking since the end of the 1990s (Bovaird 2008). This also explains why the stakeholder concept seems to have entered the post-structuralist arena of public management including city planning and urban governance.

Marketization and City Branding

Within recent years marketing and management seem to have taken on a profound role within the public sector. Public administration and governance now involves disciplines such as branding (e.g. Virgo & de Chernatony 2006), corporate communication (e.g. Trueman et al. 2004), and marketing (Kotler et al. 1993) initiated by the Public Management Reform (Pollitt & Bouckaert 2000) in which the public sector is ascribed market-oriented behaviour. Hence, we are witnessing what is known as a marketization of society at large and of the public sector and state-owned enterprises in particular – at both organizational and individual level. Corporations are conceptualized as citizens (and corporate citizens, Crane et al. 2004), and individuals are addressed as consumer-citizens (cf. Littler 2009; Ritzer 2008). Both within research and as a social practice, there has been a blurring of boundaries between the public and the market, staging the city (as part of public administration conceptualized from a political-economic perspective) as a marketized enterprise, involving complex organizational structures and mechanisms. Thus, the application of theories of management and organization to public administration and urban research seems reasonable and is not new: Virgo & de Chernatony base their city brand-building model on the premise of a multiple and complex variety of stakeholders, thereby arguing that city branding “involves complexities beyond those of product and service branding” (Virgo & de Chernatony 2006: 379). Trueman et al. take a similar approach in combining city branding and stakeholder management as they point out conflicting objectives of stakeholder groups as a basic reason for a complex brand structure dealing with multiple identities (Trueman et al. 2004). The references within stakeholder management and city branding, place marketing etc. are endless. However, all references (similar to Virgo & de Chernatony 2006 and Trueman et al. 2004) apply stakeholder management theory as a practical and/or analytical tool, e.g. in developing a city brand, measuring city brand equity etc. We see these practical/analytical approaches to stakeholder theory in opposition to the approach taken within this

article; that is using stakeholder management theory as a conceptual approach in framing the city as a complex form of organization, helping to reconceptualize the city as networks of compound relations between stakeholders entering different forms of relations and structures according to the stakes and the derived effects and values.

The existing literature demonstrates the relevance of applying stakeholder and management theories to urban studies. Our contribution is to provide a more nuanced and detailed picture of stakeholder theory as we unfold its conceptual potentials as a framework for urban living. In the following we present an elaborate overview on stakeholder theory, epistemologically framed from a modern, post-modern and hypermodern position respectively.

Stakeholder Theory: Mapping the Field

The introduction of the stakeholder concept has helped to redefine the way organizations are conceptualized and managed. Applying a stakeholder approach to managing an organization implies that its managers are perceived as agents for stakeholders and not only for shareholders. The organization is defined in terms of a grouping of stakeholders, and its purpose is to manage these stakeholders' interests, needs and attitudes (Friedman & Miles 2006: 1). The stakeholder concept has gained ground from the mid-1980s following the appearance of an increasing number of books and articles including special issues on the subject in notable journals such as *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Critical Perspectives in Accounting*, *Academy of Management Review* and *Academy of Management Journal* (Friedman & Miles 2006: 3). The stakeholder concept has grown in popularity not only in academic circles but also among policymakers, regulators and NGOs – and in business and the media. For the same reason the stakeholder concept is not a clearly defined concept. It is a multiple concept which covers a broad spectrum of interests and meanings, including schools of thought ranging from political economy to institutional and management theory. Philosophically speaking, stakeholding represents a general sense of social inclusion in a community in which every citizen is a valued member who contributes and benefits. From a participatory perspective, stakeholding assumes active participation in processes of accountability; and financially speaking a material interest in the well-being of an enterprise is what legitimates such participation (Clarke 1997: 211).

The Traditional Approach to Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder approach to understanding an organization in its environment has paved the way for a broader perception of the roles and responsibilities of organizations beyond profit maximization than the perception of the traditional shareholder perspective on organizations. The mission of any organization is not only to provide for the benefit of shareholders and owners. Hence from a stakeholder

perspective, managers should integrate interests and claims from other groups into the strategic management of their business (Mitchell, Agle & Wood 1997: 853). Stakeholder management gained a good deal of ground during the 1980s. According to one of the fathers of stakeholder theory, Robert E. Freeman, stakeholders are defined as “groups and individuals who can affect, or are affected by the achievement of an organization’s mission” (Freeman 1984: 52). Freeman pointed out that no group must be left out just because it may prevent a company from achieving its goal. In Freeman’s rather broad definition, groups who do not have a direct legitimate interest in a company (terrorists, for instance) are to be considered as stakeholders along with other more legitimate groups. Stakeholder management thus refers to the necessity for an organization to manage its relationship with particular stakeholders on an action-oriented basis (Freeman 2005: 122).

Traditional stakeholder mapping has the organization at its centre, surrounded by its stakeholders as shown in figure 1.

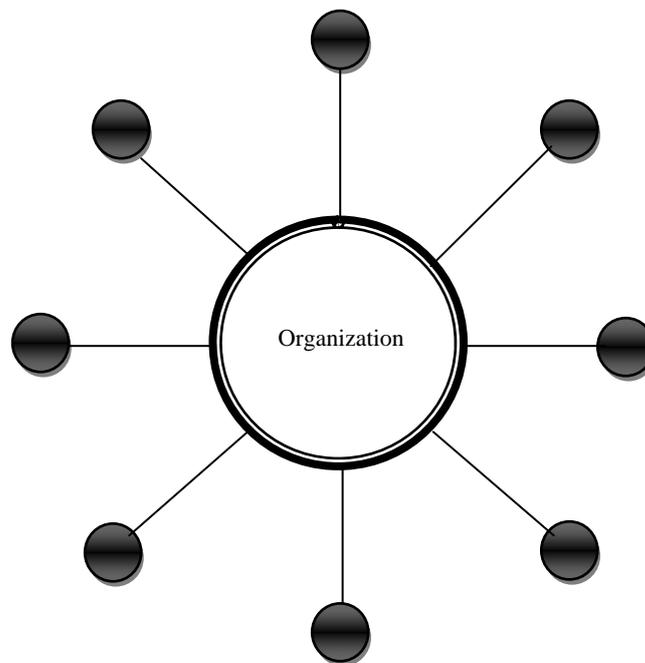


Figure 1: Modern stakeholder mapping

The approach to organizations as presented by Freeman’s stakeholder theory (1984) subscribes to a paradigm of modernity, claiming that the universe is causally linked to a structured and ordered whole (Brown 1995). Transferred into an organizational logic, organizational structures and relations are instrumental, stable and consistent, constantly referring to an acclaimed essence. The organization is an ordered, predictable and measurable unit structured across a rationale of economics, politics and power. Value creation is first and foremost of an economic nature. Metaphorically speaking, modern organizations can be conceptual-

ized as machines (Weber 1947). These thoughts are in opposition to a paradigm of postmodernity, claiming that the world is chaotic and complex; merely to be grasped momentarily and only as an interpretive stance (Lyotard 1984). Hence, postmodernity replaces the universal and global Truth with several individual, local truths. Applied to a management and organizational context, postmodern organizations can metaphorically be conceptualized as living organisms (Weick 1995), assessing the organization as chaotic, unpredictable and unstable. The postmodern turn has equally had a profound influence on stakeholder management theory (Friedman & Miles 2006), as demonstrated in the following section.

The Postmodern Approach to Stakeholder Theory

The most significant exponents of the postmodern perspective on stakeholder theory are Calton and Kurland (1995), who replace the concept of “stakeholder management” with “stakeholder enabling” in order to emphasize the shift from the static instrumental perception of stakeholders who can be “managed” towards a notion of stakeholders as groups who are in a dynamic interaction with the post-bureaucratic networked organization (Friedman & Miles 2006: 71). Collaboration between the organization and its stakeholders is hence unfolded in concepts such as interdependency, co-responsibility, co-decision making and emergent collaboration processes (Friedman & Miles 2006). Consequently, in more recent research on stakeholder theory both the stakeholder concept and the concept of power are approached from a broader and more nuanced perspective. The stakeholder concept hence embraces groups who are momentarily dormant and notions such as non-stakeholder, stakekeepers and stakewatchers, etc. appear in new stakeholder models (Fassin 2008; Mitchell, Agle & Wood 1997) along with alternative stakeholder groupings based on salience, urgency, and legitimacy. These alternatives are established in order to adapt stakeholder theory to a more contextualized and emergent approach to stakeholder management (e.g. Mitchell, Agle & Wood 1997). Therefore, in a postmodern perspective the stakeholder-oriented organization is one which is part of a stakeholder network connected by mutually linked relationships as demonstrated in figure 2.

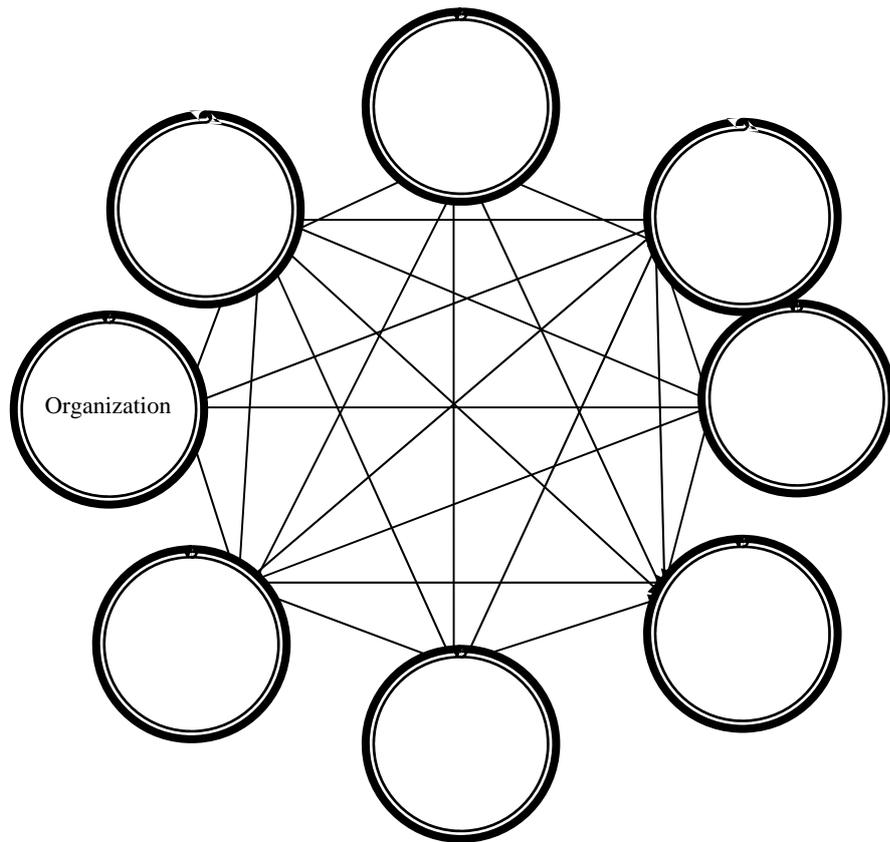


Figure 2: Postmodern stakeholder mapping

Transparency, dialogue and mutual understanding (not between the organization and its stakeholders but between stakeholders within the network) are core elements. Stakeholder management thereby becomes a question of how communication amongst stakeholders is perceived, practised and interpreted. Defined by what is meaningful to each of the stakeholders, value creation comes to embrace emotional as well as rational elements. Inspired by Grunig and Hunt's model of public relations (Grunig & Hunt 1984), Morsing and Schultz (2006) established a framework of stakeholder communication, arguing that stakeholders can be approached using various strategies that take into account the contextual and dynamic features of specific communicative frames. These strategies ranging from linear to interactive ways of addressing stakeholders are devised as a means to approach stakeholder communication from a more strategic and sense-making standpoint, enabling businesses to intensify stakeholder dialogue and incorporate relevant stakeholder response and feed-back into their business strategy. (Morsing & Schultz 2006: 142). However, the strategic reflection on how to confront stakeholders bears witness to a change of focus in stakeholder management. Postmodern stakeholder management theory focuses on meeting rather than managing stakeholders. Meeting stakeholders is not practised from a centric position. Meetings emerge crisscross between members of a network in which the organization

does not constitute a power centre as in the perspective of modernity. Hence, the organization as a centre has dissolved and fragmented into a network of individual stakeholders, whose positions are continuously reflected upon.

The Hypermodern Approach to Stakeholder Theory

According to contemporary philosophers and sociologists, we are entering hypermodern times (Lipovetsky 2005; Maffesoli 1996); a society characterized by the embracing of multiple juxtapositions of oppositions and paradoxes – or as formulated by Lipovetsky: “le bonheur paradoxal” (Lipovetsky 2006); a paradoxical happiness. Hence, while Giddens defined the project of late modernity (or post-modernity) as a search for local and individual coherence and stability for the self (Giddens 1991), the project of hypermodernity has transformed into a project of pragmatics: Truth is no longer an issue, but has been dissolved into a question of eclecticism and pragmatics, thereby being paradoxical, self-contradictory but meaningful (Lipovetsky 2005). Coherent identity is no longer the ideal frame of reference, but has been superseded by a chain of images (Cova 1996). These hypermodern tendencies can also be traced within organizational and stakeholder management theory, in which the organization assumes both intended and non-intended roles in an ever changing and dynamic web of relations as illustrated in figure 3.

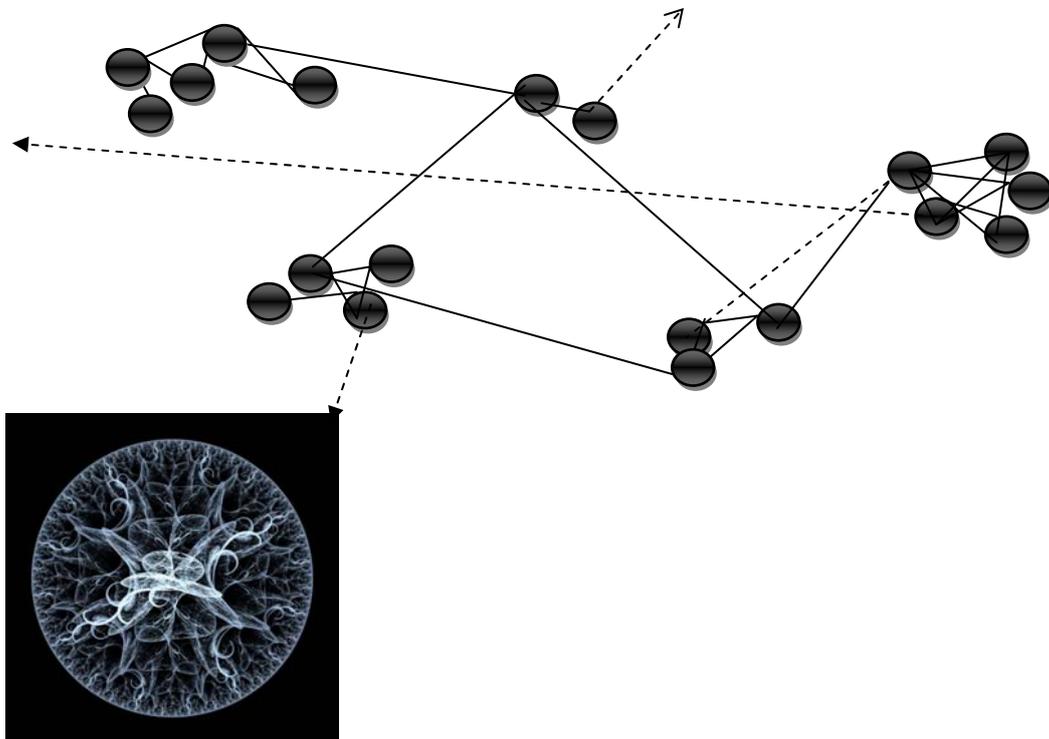


Figure 3: Sector of a hypermodern stakeholder mapping

In the perspective of hypermodernity, corporations do not demonstrate coherent and consistent behaviour. Managing stakeholders is hence a contradictory and paradoxical activity, breaking down the idea of constructing unambiguous and meaningful relationships. Consumers are unpredictable, consuming hyper-luxury goods while engaging in ethical projects at the same time. Corporations demonstrate ethical concern in some stakeholder configurations (saving the rainforest), while doing harm in others (e.g. corruptive bargaining). Acknowledging that stakeholder groups sometimes compete against and sometimes complement each other becomes a non-existing issue (Neville & Menguc 2006: 377). New concepts are entering the arena of stakeholder management in hypermodernity such as stakeholder multiplicity, fluidity and infinity, as elaborated below.

Stakeholder Multiplicity, Fluidity and Infinity

The classical conceptualization of stakeholders as human beings or entities that are aware of their power towards organizations (Driscoll & Starik 2004: 58) means that non-human beings cannot be part of an organization's stakeholder groups. In this perspective "nature" is excluded as a stakeholder, for the reason that the natural environment supplies resources to the organization but usually not through economic exchange relationships. But from a hypermodern angle, the stakeholder concept is extended to include non-human beings. As stated by Driscoll and Starik, the reason why "nature" has been excluded as a potential stakeholder until recently is that the legitimacy and power of stakeholders to help or hurt organizations is more or less anchored in a political-economic framework. They argue that since the natural environment holds coercive and utilitarian power over businesses and industries as an important part of the business environment and through super-storms, hurricanes (and more recently global climate change), there is no reason why the role of stakeholder should not include non-human nature (Starik 1995: 209). Moreover, the natural environment cannot be said not to contain any instantiation of economic authority – for instance, extractive industries in particular depend on the natural environment to provide economic benefits. Finally, the stakeholder concept is said to articulate both ethical and socio-emotional connotations. Moral obligation pointed out by Carroll (1989; 1993) as an important stakeholder value together with the aesthetization of particular natural phenomena (e.g. rare species) are fundamental examples by which nature is praised and attributed aesthetic and expressive value (Starik 1995: 211). In this context value creation is neither political-economic nor emotional. Wrapped in a paradigm of social responsibility, value creation becomes a quest for aesthetic expressivity and symbolic games within infinite and abstract types of relations.

The acknowledgement of the necessity to account more actively for the natural environment as part of the business environment and as a moral and socio-emotional stakeholder for and in itself brings us to the conclusion that, rather than engaging in functional relationships with organizations, stakeholders in the

hypermodern perspective enter into aesthetic and visually expressed relationships. These relations are volatile and momentary, following the idea of relationships as tribes. According to the French sociologist Michel Maffesoli, we are entering the time of the tribes and thereby entering a new social order; a sociality characterized by disindividuality and the formation of increasingly fluid and unstable social relations in society (Maffesoli 1996). Just like the stakeholder, the tribe is “without the rigidity of the forms of organization with which we are familiar, it refers more to a certain ambience, a state of mind” (Maffesoli 1996: 98); and just like unstable stakeholder relations, tribes are “characterized by fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal” (Maffesoli 1996: 76).

A postmodern stakeholder perspective forefronts the empowerment of the individual and places an analytical interest on the individual stakeholder (being the individual consumer, the media, individual corporate citizens etc.) as the object of study; unlike a hypermodern stakeholder position, which holds an interest in stakeholder interactions and interrelationships as it upholds a disindividuated (or tribal) analytical focus.

From a hypermodern perspective corporations no longer have the control and power to manage or even to meet and simply relate to their stakeholders through appropriate networks and communities. They must recognize that stakeholders are multiple, fluid and infinite, forcing corporations to navigate in uncontrollable situations of decision-making, planning and action.

Summing up, we have demonstrated that stakeholder theory has played an important part in determining the way in which organizations interact with their environment, and more specifically how they conceptualize the relationships with various groups to whom they are closely or distantly related. From a modern perspective stakeholder relationships are framed as a political-economic contractual understanding of what an organization’s value creation is, how it is generated and for whom. Stakeholder models are based on functional and rational transactions, and stakeholder relationships are perceived as stable centric relations between physical actors and the organization as a constant authority. Postmodern spectacles bring a broader perspective on the stakeholder framework in which stakeholder relations have a more network-based structure and the relations between members are more equal and organized around emotional values, offering a more central position for the individual than a modern perspective. Value creation is not only a question of economic contractual understandings; value creation is generated from emotional sense-making interaction between the stake and the individual stakeholders, providing a dyadic focus on relations. Within the perspective of hypermodernity, stakeholder relations draw on aesthetic values, forefronting relations as flows of expressed images between stakeholders: it is about stakeholder positioning and the exchange of images within a dynamic web of non-committal relations.

Entering the City Enterprise

Below, we unfold the city as a complex form of organization and its consequences perceived within the frame of stakeholder theory as presented above, in conceptualizing relational structures. These theoretical generic conceptualizations will be exemplified by an illustrative case, which will be introduced subsequently.

Stakeholder theory covers a wide range of approaches which we have structured within a modern, postmodern and hypermodern perspective respectively. Consequently, we might ask how the city emerges from these three stakeholder approaches.

When framing an object within a specific perspective, some features and structures appear more clearly than others. A narrative perspective on the city forefronts tales of the city (cf. Finnegan 1998); while a synergetic perspective highlights the city as a self-organization (cf. Portugali 1999), for instance. Framing the city within a stakeholder perspective makes the city appear in the form of structures and patterns of manifest and latent relations and interests.

When reconfiguring the city within a modern frame of stakeholder theory (Freeman 1984), the city appears in the form of a political-economic enterprise: The city is the sum of its political and economic governance, constituted by stakeholders who affect or are affected within this political and economic centre of power. The city perceived within this modern stakeholder perspective is based on the premise that relations within the city are to be managed, measured and operated as mainstream machinery fuelled on economic power. Hence, we might perceive the city as a structure of oppositional differentiations drawing lines between those who have political-economic power and influence and those who are subordinated to this power, mirroring a classical demarcation between production as power and consumption as eroding what is good for society.

Firat & Venkatesh deliver a cultural critique of modernism and “the modernist distinction between production and consumption and the privileging of production over consumption” (Firat & Venkatesh 1995: 239). They argue that postmodernism is framed by a logic of consumption and emphasize that the consumer is an active producer of self-images in the consumption process (Firat & Schultz 1997; Firat & Venkatesh 1995), constantly striving to construct a coherent narrative of the self (Giddens 1991). Thus, power is primarily performed through consumption, staging the citizen as a consumer-citizen enacting his/her power through consumer behaviour.

Empowerment of the consumer(-citizen) and stakeholders in general is a main characteristic which differentiates a modern from a post- and hypermodern stakeholder perspective on the city: The city’s centre of power has dissolved. The city as static and dyadic relations between a political centre and its stakeholders is transformed into a network of interdependencies and emergent formations. Power is no longer inherent to the city, but is constituted by the amount and quality of relations (cf. Neville & Menguc 2006), forefronting new alliances and stakeholder

synergies (e.g. social partnerships, strategic alliances etc.) Consequently, any clear-cut line between each group of stakeholders is suspended. Using a postmodern approach to stakeholder theory as a frame of reference, the city is constantly emerging as modern (political-economic) and centric values are dissolved into a marketized flux of commodified stakeholder identities (cf. Featherstone 1991; Lury 1996).

Hence, in conceptualizing the city as a postmodern enterprise, power and authority are delegated – the city is individualized. The institutionalized city centre is transformed into a city-scape, inhabited by autonomous individual stakeholders and stakeholder groups, striving to construct their own stakeholder identity.

A hypermodern stakeholder approach to the city redefines the nature of stakeholder relations, which we argue correspond to the notion of tribes (Maffesoli 1996). The concept of tribes opposes the notion of social relations in classical sociological terms and notions of premodern *Gemeinschaft* and modern *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies 1957). In this perspective, post- and hypermodernity are two polarized critiques of modernity; while the postmodern perspective replaces the modern alienation and loss of community by a self-reflexive and autonomous individual, forefronting a non-sociality par excellence, the hypermodern approach reinstalls the individual (and individual stakeholder groups) in new social configurations.

In continuation of the theoretical view on hypermodern stakeholder theory, which instantiates nature as a pivotal point and persistent stakeholder (or stake role), the city enterprise should no longer just be conceptualized as a grand unified whole (cf. a modern perspective) or a fragment inhabited by autonomous stakeholders (cf. a postmodern perspective); instead, it simultaneously manifests itself in volatile gatherings constantly focusing on which role to perform in the emergent web of infinite relations.

If we return to Freeman's core concept of the stakeholder as someone who affects or is affected by an organization's mission, it is necessary to align the concept to the urban context in order to understand how the stakeholder conflates with the "citizen". As we have demonstrated in the section above, the stakeholder concept is conceptualized differently in the modern, postmodern and hypermodern perspective respectively. From a modern perspective, stakeholders of the city are conceptualized as sectorized groups that are mapped as generic and established aggregations of members in the city in terms of their public administrative affiliation, e.g. corporations, consumers, the media, NGOs, research and educational institutions etc. conceived as citizen groups. Their stake in the city is their gain or loss from urban life seen from a cost-benefit perspective. In the postmodern scenario stakeholders are specific and fragmented individuals and organizations operating as citizens in urban life. Their stake in the city is concerned with the creation of the authentic self, and is therefore guided by narcissistic and emotional interests. The hypermodern position conceptualizes the stakeholder within a reso-

cialization of individuals and organizations in specific citizen communities and networks of non-sectorial nature (sports groups, women's networks, Facebook groups, etc.) Blurring the boundaries between these groupings and between inner self-reflection and outer appearance, the hypermodern approach opens up for a more non-obligative position than the former approaches. In order to relate in communities and networks, citizens put on (or take off) convenient masks according to the specific roles they perform in these urban settings. The stake in this position is therefore not the benefit or threat represented by the city enterprise, nor the authenticity or emotional self-construction, but the relational and interactional performance of the citizen.

Case presentation: Carbon Neutralizing the City

As a response to the persistent climate-change challenges and with reference to the hosting of the COP15: United Nations Climate Change Conference in Denmark, Copenhagen in December 2009, several Danish cities are endeavouring to become CO₂ neutral within a relatively short period of time. The Municipality of Aarhus has initiated a campaign entitled Aarhus CO₂30, expressing the vision of becoming carbon neutral by the year 2030. 1

The Aarhus CO₂30 initiative was launched at a four-day exhibition (March 2009) in downtown Aarhus which invited citizens to interactively engage in the climate debate (see picture 1).



Picture 1: The CO₂30 exhibition

The exhibition covered a wide range of events and activities, including an interactive game board inviting citizens to actively share their everyday behaviour and constantly face dilemmas in which their own behaviour was measured and compared with other game players depending on its impact on the natural environment (see picture 2).



Picture 1 The interactive game board

The CO2030 game has subsequently been on a public city tour and placed at local hot spots (e.g. the city hall, public library etc.) for the use of all. Aesthetic and artistic sound installations, corporate initiatives on sustainable innovations, exhibitions of sustainable designs by educational institutions, and political speeches and public discussion were all an integrated part of the exhibition.

The main feature of the exhibition was the installation Co2nfessions/Co2mmitment which was entirely constituted by citizen-generated content projected onto bus shelters throughout the city of Aarhus and on a large scale using a prominent building in Aarhus as a backdrop.

Co2nfessions/Co2mmitment is an advanced video installation that puts a face on the struggle for climate improvements and gives the citizens of Aarhus a voice to be heard – and seen – throughout the city (cf. www.co2030.dk). In short, the installation features a compartment or cubicle where individuals (and small groups) are invited to “confess” their climate sins and “commit” to future climate-responsible behaviour in front of a digital camera recording their confessions and displaying them on digital screens placed throughout the city (see picture 3)



Picture 3: Co2nfessions / Co2mmitment

In the following section, we will frame the Co2nfessions/Co2mmitment installation within modern, postmodern and hypermodern stakeholder positions, allowing us to grasp the complexity of city life and urban relations, exemplified by the climate-change challenges in urban living.

Stakeholder Mapping the City

Climate change and the complex of problems related to it have challenged urban life. The environment and the climate have been put on the agenda as a primary priority: corporations are met with demands for social responsibility and sustainable productivity; politicians are met with demands for environmental priority, consumers are increasingly addressed with a demand for climate-conscious behaviour (Stohl, Stohl & Townsley 2007; Carroll 2008) etc. In other words: A new actor has entered the stage: Nature. And as an omnipresent force, she sets the agenda for urban life as well as for how to conceptualize urban living. Nature has become a premise of urban life. The Aarhus CO2030 exhibition is a manifestation of the way in which a wide variety of stakeholders enter into complex forms of relations as they negotiate, participate in and make sense of one of the most challenging issues of recent times: how to fight global climate change in a local urban setting.

In this section we will exemplify the different forms of relations, stakeholder interactions and visions as we draw on a modern, postmodern and hypermodern perspective, thus illustrating how the complexity of the city can be conceived.

Modern City Relations and Climate Change

A modern stakeholder perspective on the Aarhus CO2030 forefronts Aarhus as a municipal authority and its stakeholders, who are all obliged to take responsibil-

ity; urban life is conceptualized as a life of obligations. Stakeholders are obliged to take part in solving climate problems, not least because these problems can be seen as a result of stakeholders' general abuse of natural resources in the past, causing serious climate damage for the present and the years to come. Participating in neutralizing energy consumption and helping to fight climate change are thus framed as a civic obligation. The more environmental injury citizens are likely to cause, the more they compromise the balance of natural resources and provoke cost-intensive investments in new energy. The stakeholder value in the modern perspective is generated by "good citizenship", which can be unfolded as the actual actions and behaviour of the stakeholders in obeying predefined responsibilities of being concerned for and caring for the climate by engaging themselves in urban and regional agendas. Having set the goal of neutralizing CO₂ emissions by 2030, the Municipality of Aarhus expects its citizens to contribute and cooperate with this climate agenda from a contractual, co-responsible stakeholder perspective, assuming that any stakeholder who has a citizen's rights (e.g. social benefits such as social aids, voting at local elections, having access to public schools, creating a business) must prove themselves willing to engage in civic goals, i.e. neutralizing or reducing energy consumption. Stakeholders legitimate their formal licenses to learn, live and operate in the city by contributing to the climate agenda in Aarhus (e.g. focusing on the issue of climate change in educational institutions, setting up energy plans in industries, getting involved in sustainable living programmes, reducing private energy use etc.) In this respect, the Aarhus CO₂2030 exhibition can be seen as a response to these formal expectations. Citizens' failure to respond to the "glocal" climate agenda enables the local government to resort to legal regulation on energy consumption and carbon footprints, emphasizing the authority and legal power structure within a frame of modern stakeholder theory.

The CO₂2030 case of Aarhus exemplifies this stakeholder accountability to the authorities. Within this perspective, the CO₂Confession/CO₂Commitment box takes on the meaning of a classical confession box with the Municipality of Aarhus representing the civic authority of "power" in control of citizens' absolution. The camera which projects the confessions and commitments plays a crucial role in the metaphorical universe of absolution. It symbolizes the "pastoral authority" of the priest who has the power to give absolution to the confessing citizen, who must publicly confess his sins as a form of penance. Hence, the public transmission and broadcasting of citizen sins becomes the pillory of present times.

A modern notion of stakeholder relations in the city is built upon the philosophy of *quid pro quo*. It is based on mutual understanding and fairness. From a rational economic perspective, the stakeholders of Aarhus are supposed to have mutual interests in responding to the climate challenge by lowering energy consumption because saving energy and being innovative at municipal level also allow individual stakeholders and citizens to lower their own energy costs. Even

though the Municipality of Aarhus is in a position of authority and can set the rules of the climate agenda, the climate project is posed as an exchange of rational stakes, in other words as a win-win project.

Postmodern City Relations and Climate Change

A postmodern stakeholder perspective on the Aarhus CO2030 case constitutes stakeholders as self-reflexive citizens. The stakeholder is not obliged to take action in fighting climate change (cf. the previous section on modern city stakes and actions), but is self-regulated. Actions helping to neutralize energy consumption and fight climate change are reasoned within the individual stakeholder himself. He is not driven by legal regulations or subjugated to any authority ethics, but rather constitutes his own self-righteous ethic. The postmodern self-reflexive stakeholder accounts for his own actions according to his own stake, viz. a constant striving to create and maintain a coherent sense of self; to construct his own identity, whether it is a quest for organizational or corporate identity, individual identity or other stakeholder identity. Climate-conscious actions are rooted in narcissistic motifs.

What is accentuated from a postmodern stakeholder perspective is thus a focus on the dyadic relation between the single stakeholder (individual consumers, the media, government, politicians, organizations, NGOs etc.) and the stake (nature/climate/environment), expressing an interest in how stakeholders make sense of and add meaning to this relationship; not in the sense of duty, but as a virtue.

The case of Aarhus CO2030 demonstrates an interesting aspect of this relation in that it thematizes climate-conscious behaviour as a self-reflexive process, implying that the individual stakeholder constructs his identity based on good deeds; meaning that when the individual stakeholder saves energy as an intentional choice of behaviour, he is simultaneously constructing himself as a caring, responsible and ethical individual, corporation or organization. Hence, nature is transformed into a commodity to mirror yourself in; an extension of the individual or corporate self and hence a resource for providing meaning and coherence for one's self-identity.

When conceptualized within a postmodern frame, the engagement of the city of Aarhus in fighting climate change captures integrative and unifying significance: It is about creating and understanding the organizational self. Climate-conscious initiatives take on inclusive dimensions as they aim at constructing the city around ethical values and responsible self-images, hence including city members within these values: We, as a city, are socially responsible and ethically caring, providing a frame for urban life.

The individual stakeholder of the city (corporate citizens, media citizens, consumer citizens etc.) adopts similar narcissistic motifs in their climate-conscious behaviour as explicated in the CO2mmitment/CO2nfession installation, where individuals are invited to confess their climate sins and commit to future climate-

conscious behaviour. From the perspective of self-reflexivity and self-identity, the installation provides a space for the stakeholder to negotiate his own self; the negotiation is played out as an emotional relation between the individual and the camera, symbolizing one's own guilty climate conscience. The camera becomes a mirror to reflect one's deeds. The confession box thus becomes a mental space for self-reflection and self-negotiation of an ideal and desired self-narrative based on responsible behaviour.

Hypermodern City Relations and Climate Change

From a hypermodern stakeholder perspective, relations in the city are based on expressiveness: actions leading to climate-conscious behaviour are performed in order to stage a certain image for a community of shared beliefs. Whereas the postmodern stakeholder perspective adopts an individual and emotional focus on city relations, a hypermodern perspective upholds an interest in exposed relations: It is about looking good, rather than feeling good. From a hypermodern perspective, ethical actions of being good are conceived as a quest to look good, so the ethical valuation of actions is socially negotiated within specific communities rather than being self-regulated. A hypermodern conceptualization transforms the notion of emotional, identity-seeking citizens into performing citizens who use climate-conscious behaviour as a symbolic resource or commodity for appearance performance.

From a hypermodern perspective the self-reflexivity of the city gains expressive dimensions as the city initiates and organizes climate-change responses in order to exhibit an ethical image. From a market perspective, climate-conscious initiatives are performed as brand values; the city of Aarhus has turned into a climate-conscious brand.

The expressive and stage-performing dimensions of climate-conscious actions, which we argue characterize hypermodern stakeholder relations, are prominent in the case of Aarhus CO2030. The exhibition offers both a way of seeing (i.e. learning and reflecting upon) how to act responsibly according to the norms of ethical behaviour, and a way of being seen, *per se*. The exhibition exhibits the responsible performances of the citizens.

In the case of the CO2nfeffion/CO2mmitment installation, the mental confession box is converted into an online stage for image performance, transforming the intimacy and internal dimensions of self-reflection and construction of self-identity into a focus on exterior relations. Here, the camera symbolizes the community of fellow-citizens in relation to whom citizens constantly stage their good deeds with a view to being recognized and acknowledged as citizens with a good appearance: It looks good to be good. Climate-conscious behaviour is performed and judged according to a socially negotiated code of ethical behaviour. Interestingly, climate-conscious behaviour from this perspective takes on a social and performative character rather than entailing physical environmental consequences.

What is at stake is not the climate but the image of the citizen – or rather: The stakes are intertwined. When enacted front stage and literally when performed online, the citizen puts himself on the line and becomes a part of a social game. This is mostly evident in situations where the image performance is obviously nothing but a performance detached from actual actions. The following example bears witness to this. A young woman enters the confession box along with her 10-year-old child. Listing examples of her own exemplary energy behaviour, the woman stages herself as a responsible mother and citizen. However, this good stand is compromised when her daughter exclaims that the mother’s good deeds are false, hence being nothing but a sugar-coated image performance of ideal good behaviour. The woman exhibits herself – she has not displayed good behaviour but has been exhibited – thereby revealing that citizenship can be a game of civic performance and role play.

The Stakeholder Concept and Urban Living

When approaching the city from the three perspectives of stakeholder theory, opposing notions of the citizen, of citizenship and of relations emerge, as summarized in table 1.

	Modern stakeholder perspective on urban living	Postmodern stakeholder perspective on urban living	Hypermodern stakeholder perspective on urban living
The city metaphorically	Machine	Network of autonomic individuals	Infinite network of performed roles
Stakeholder focus	Centric: the authoritarian city	Fragmented: the individual citizen	Re-socialized: the expressive citizen
Conceptualizing stakeholders as	Obligated citizens	Self-reflexive citizens	Performing citizens
Conceptualizing the relational bond as	Contractual	Emotional	Performative
Stakeholder value	Living up to good citizenship	Creating a coherent self identity	Staging and performing an image
Stakeholder vision	Being good (duty)	Feeling good (virtue)	Looking good (aesthetic)
Ethical legitimacy	Authority ethic	Self-righteous ethic	Socially negotiated ethic

Table 1: Three conceptual stakeholder perspectives on urban living

The case of Aarhus CO2030 has exemplified the complexity of urban life and emphasized that these relational complexities, oppositional structures and stake interests all exist simultaneously. Citizens are conceived of as parts of both empowered and obliged relational structures; they are both peripheral, being affected by an authoritarian agenda, and the main characters in creating their own personal storyline. They chase emotional coherence and meaning as well as performing non-committal role play.

A post- and hypermodern perspective on the case of Aarhus CO2030 illustrates stakeholder sovereignty and authority as the stakeholder enacts his own individual

agenda, i.e. self-identity constructions and image performance, thus framing climate-conscious behaviour within a discourse of emotional and casual relations respectively. Urban actions leading to climate change are nothing but narcissistic games and role playing. The individual stakeholder is liberated to perform climate-conscious actions according to his own agenda – and is empowered to formulate his own agenda. From a postmodern perspective, the individual holds himself responsible for his own actions, discursively constituting the citizens as autonomous, self-regulated and liberated stakeholders. From a hypermodern perspective, the individual stakeholder is responsible for his behaviour according to a non-committal social game.

Hence, a post- and hypermodern stakeholder perspective on actions for climate change in an urban context emphasizes relational behaviour framed within a discourse of empowerment and stakeholder sovereignty. However, a modern stakeholder approach challenges this notion as the stakeholder is subordinate to the demands of an authority, formulated in this case by the Municipality of Aarhus. Hence, the stakeholder is subject to an obligation of ethical behaviour and thereby inscribed in a stakeholder map of citizen responsibilities and ethical duties. From this perspective, actions for climate change as a means of identity construction and image performance do not demonstrate stakeholder empowerment but rather ways of coping with citizen obligations.

Concluding Remarks

Stakeholder management has gained terrain in businesses, research and education since the mid-1980s, with an increasing impact on how private and public corporations are conceived and governed. The conceptualization of stakeholder management from three perspectives has proved useful for two reasons.

Firstly, focusing on the relational aspect of managing organizations, stakeholder management helps us to grasp the complexity of relations and networks which imbue organizations of all kinds in the age of globalization (Castells 2001). For the same reason, stakeholder management reached beyond business research and practice a long time ago, and is now recognized in many areas including urban studies and sectors such as public and non-profit organizations. Consequently, it is natural to consider “the city” as a complex corporation that needs appropriate models of business excellence in order to respond to citizen stakeholders’ needs, expectations and obligations.

From an urban governance perspective, the classical stakeholder approach to conceptualizing the city seems to offer a fruitful entry point to consider the functional structures and systems of relations between urban stakeholders and citizens, while a postmodern and hypermodern approach allows us to focus on the playing, image constructive and performance-creative dimensions of these relations as an integrative part of urban life.

As emphasized above, the adoption of the three different approaches to conceptualizing the city is not an attempt to analyze urban life within an evolutionary framework. Rather than describing an evolutionary process, we have attempted to illustrate the way in which the types of relations between citizens co-exist, enrich and supplement each other, ranging from binary resource-dependent relations to inner, intimate relations with one's self and performing and stage-setting relations between and among citizens. The triple conceptualization thus enables us not only to identify types of functional relationships between citizens. It also seems to offer a platform for nuancing different types of relationships and being sensitive to contradictory relationships and stakes in the city.

Second, the concept of "stake" has proved to be relevant in the sense that it encompasses a wide range of individual stakeholders' agendas, interests, needs, expectations and desires with which a municipality is faced. Business corporations, higher education and research institutions, local NGOs and the media do not necessarily have common interests, needs, expectations and obligations in the fight against climate change. For instance, when researchers at the Centre for Digital Urban Living at Aarhus University chose to cooperate with the Municipality of Aarhus by setting up a confession box at the climate exhibition in the city hall, this should not alone be conceived as an obligation and co-responsible initiative for citizens to fight climate as a goal for an in itself. Furthermore, this initiative becomes a means of staging the act of seeking support and funding opportunities vis-à-vis members of the municipality in another type of discourse-relational setting in which researchers must use impression management strategies in order to receive grants to do their research. Similarly, the fact that large corporations have volunteered for the climate project by giving presentations, setting up installations, offering free consultancy on energy reduction, etc. does not only reflect their eagerness to live up to their climate obligation. It is also a performance aimed at gaining influence in the political environment and a means of stimulating their image and reputation in the eyes of local government members. Finally, the initiative does not only involve consumers complying with their civic obligations by using less energy. It is also important that consumers reflect on how, why and for whom they are staging themselves as good citizens in terms of energy consumption.

As shown above, it has not been our intention to make a detailed analysis of the relationships and types of relations established around the Aarhus CO2030 case. The case has only been introduced as an illustration of how a multifaceted stakeholder approach to conceptualizing a complex system such as a city can serve as a productive framework for understanding how citizens approach urban living. However, future research on stakeholding the city must be undertaken in order to produce empirical evidence of the value and contribution of our conceptual framework, and to generate further insights into how stakeholder relations are constructed, maintained and dissolved in a setting of urban living.

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Notes

- 1 Aarhus is the second-largest city in Denmark with a population of more than 300,000, of whom approximately 13 per cent attend higher or further education courses. This makes Aarhus at heart the youngest city in Denmark, which is reflected in a rich and varied cultural and business life, characterized by innovation and new thinking. For instance, Aarhus has the largest concentration of important media enterprises and higher education institutions in Denmark. These characteristics are communicatively embraced by the city’s core brand value, which is “Pulse”. In relation to climate, Aarhus has been made the Energy Town of 2009 by the Danish Ministry of Climate and Energy, thereby serving as an innovative front runner with regard to the climate. The city of Aarhus has previously taken initiatives and acted as a front runner in responding to climate and environmental challenges, e.g. by initiating public campaigns such as “Clean City”.

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