# THE ROLE OF SPACE, ACTIVITIES AND SKILLS IN OUTDOOR EDUCATION - USING VISUAL Methods to explore experience In qualitative research

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### ABSTRACT

The article is a synthetic analysis of the of space, activities and skills in the Outdoor education model in the context of Using Visual Methods to Explore Experience in Qualitative Research. The gathering of research material, in the form of photos was shown in two stages, which were stages with a ratio equivalent. The first situation was researched by The Treehouse Building Camp, organized by Buitendoor in the Netherlands, in the woods around Nunspeet (VIII 2016), the other, Low Rope Course was organized by the Laboratory of Science and Adventure and instructors of Actionworx Germany (X 2016). The research material helps to compare Dutch and Polish practice in the field of outdoor adventure education. For the researcher, an important aspect is the insight into the social capital of the Dutch and Poles.

Key words: skills, outdoor education, qualitative research, photography, personal development

# INTRODUCTION

Everyday life gives a pessimistic picture of an educational school system embedded in the class-lesson limited to subject areas, based on the feeding methods of teaching. Paulo Freire recognized the essence of this system in the banking concept of education, in which knowledge is understood as a gift submitted by those who consider themselves as opposed to those who consider they do-not-know. The projects with symptoms of absolute ignorance are characteristic for oppressive ideology. These projects can negate the research process as well (Kowzan, 2013). There is a banking model of education, which is transferred from generation to generation of students successively.

Moreover, the deposit in the form of knowledge, facts, figures, dates, formulas shall be reserved in student's minds. Then these students can be tested as well as examined. This model involves only the intellectual sphere, and in fact the ability to remember, apart from the realm of psychomotor, and completely forgetting the affective sphere, understood as a value and intrinsic motivation. The banking concept of education appears as an authoritarian process. The actors of education: teacher and student cooperate in a kind of feudal, hierarchical system.

Institutional education is challenged to follow the needs of the new generation. These new needs were not previously noticed at schools , this is why the new learning methods of modern students are an irretrievable loss for their involvement in education. Also it creates the possibility that the modern student could survive without schools.

The other question should be posed in here: does any school work without the involvement of students? The school system received a task, which for many decades has been based on a completion date . The specific knowledge should be analyzed and supplied. It should be adopted, whoever the modern student is and where one derives specific values that guide it in one's independent, hedonistic, though creative life.

The meta pedagogic objects achievements are rarely used in educational practice. The sources of educational failures may be insufficiently considered in changes in the purpose of education, methods, but also in the perception of space and learning place. In traditional terms, school is treated as a part of reality in fragmentary nature. At the same time, the unreality from the outside world is an alternative to this, which students create individually, outside the school. In their minds, the students made a dichotomy: the reality of school and out of school. Firstly, the student is expected to maintain the arbitrarily imposed rules, observance of rituals, surrender to hierarchy. Not-appearing is rewarded, and suggestions for alternatives, also undermining the teacher is considered a sign of bad behavior.

Therefore the personality of the student is revealed while additional classes, are conducted with family and in the case of meetings with their peers in the private space. These are places where they can function but not only on the intellectual level, but also emotionally. Education in this sense is organized in a specific space. It is an institution of pre-school or university. This raises the question, what changes are necessary to the school be undertaken in the case of education, not just learning by a man against his rival, which is the opposite as well as the individual world of the students? The cause of loss suffered by the school lies in its perception and behavior of which this institution rewards as interpreted by the official and informal school program. Finally, the question must be asked: can this race be won alone, or should the school resign from its authoritarian position and ally itself with the offer, which consists of the world-school students.

# OUTDOOR EDUCATION - A CHANCE FOR GENERATION THREATENED WITH A SYNDROME OF NATURE DEFICIT

The contemporary, urban society has been fighting with nature. At the same time, the people have been looking greedily for substitutes. The natural

diet - in a restaurant in the city center, green patio - in the premises on the main street, green playground with a car from the park behind the fence or spinning in front of the image of the forest displayed from the projector on the wall in the club. This ambivalence defines the source of needs, but also indicates a potential barrier that stands in the way of realizing them in a dictated environment. The urban fabric, which pervades through city people as well as each successive generation brought them close to nature, but they do it through a window glass. This society has lost the habit of staying in nature, the effort undertaken at the junction with the challenge posed by the natural form of the land, animated and unanimated forms of wildlife. Such an environment is unpredictable, aloof, uncomfortable and its conditions are non-negotiable. Besides as with the first contact with a difficult terrain, these conditions may be too large a portion of adventure. Faced with the needs of a gradual rebuilding a relationship with nature, especially towards children and young people, there stands a concept of outdoor and adventure education.

The review of literature based mainly on British and American sources were generated through data bases. The literature was largely generated from data bases on education, physical education and psychology. A number of bookstand articles show that nature and the natural environment have considerable impact on the wellbeing of both adults and children, and lead to increased mental wellbeing, increased physical abilities, improved cognitive development, fewer physical ailments and accelerated recovery following illness (Taylor, & Kuo, 2009; Fjørtoft, 2004; Kaplan, 1995; Louv, 2005). Scholars around the world have observed the positive effects of outdoor learning, and also many researches describe the same thing. They bring to light how outdoor education results in, among other things, an increased ecological awareness, improved memory and the view towards one's abilities and also increased solidarity. It strengthens bonds in groups, along with strengthening the self-image of individuals (Myging, 2005; American Institutes for Research, 2005; Rickinson, 2004; Higgins, 2002).

# PHOTOGRAPHY AS A TOOL AND RESEARCH MATERIAL TO NEW-CITY LIFESTYLE AND CHANGES IN GENERATION Z

An issue, which the research project was directed at, was the outdoor space education and also the hidden content. The analysis of issues within outdoor education, in the theory but also as being an active participant in the events, verified the theme and ultimately led to extension of the analysis within the hidden curriculum of some activity in this space initiated by so called "top-down", "bottom-up", in a group, individually, due to cultural values or activities of a ritual. During the research, these issues were connected smoothly with the space in which, they were doing activities and interactions.

The gathering of research material, in the form of photos was carried on two stages, which were the stages with a ratio equivalent. The first, was revealed in the research called The Treehouse Building Camp, organized by Buitendoor in the Netherlands, in the woods around Nunspeet (VIII 2016), the other Low Rope Course organized by the Laboratory of Science and Adventure and instructors Actionworx Germany (X 2016).

The nature of activities undertaken in the studies mentioned above, placed the research in the paradigm of quality. Contrary to the positivism paradigm, they are based on a casual observation of reactions and interactions of individuals in their natural environment. They aim at holistic understanding of reality and more colorful contexts that affect it. The field of interest is the experience of respondents, but also of the researcher (Malewski, 1998). It may be claimed, that there exists the idea which is to build an image of the past, present and future to create a desirable vision of the future. The humanities, to assist the process of generating micro utopia support, for example, are respected for the various forms of life, ideas, relationships and community life, trust and respect for other human beings, or a sense of security in the world (Domańska, 2010). The trend of qualitative research, therefore, corresponds to the direction of the development of the humanities and modern changes, which can be signals of moral relativism and the ennoblement of individualism. It is not possible to understand the reality measured in such a way. There is no way to measure the circumference and give unambiguous results of these measurements. The humanities have difficulty in proposing a satisfactory explanation, for example, building constructive criticism and suggesting possible solutions in the world of phenomena. Nowadays, researchers are increasingly put into situations of powerlessness and unpredictability of the phenomena because of rapid technological progress, the ecological crisis and intensifying natural disasters, the development of global capitalism, genocide, terrorism and migration. In the sense of infirmity and unpredictability of phenomena, the model of contemplative science, gives a way to the model of perforation, which is important for the usefulness and effectiveness of the knowledge already created. Therefore, we can again consider the problems in which a background exists to the eternal dilemma of good and evil, truth, values and virtues, universals of human nature and the sacred looking for practical tips on how to live in a world where everyone has posessions and is entitled to their own truth. Increasingly, a narcissistic human subject is criticised and it is told about the community, of collectives, which are the associations of humans and non-humans, and that man is in the world a guest, not a master. (Domańska, 2010). Science should be the answer, based on the theory, to practical problems and generation of solutions to any practical problems, relative to human daily life. Both in the sense through which we look at the demand for energy as well as settlement between the superiority of community over individual or vice versa, even in relation to teaching methods.

Qualitative research includes the area of interest in microcosmos, to put the results of research in the form of a micro utopia. The objection to this para-

digm is in its ambiguity, ease in undermining the results of the study, on reperforming them in other circumstances, other researchers lack of support in the measurable evidence and universal theories. However, researchers focused around the paradigm of humanism refute the allegations, while imposing an obligation of theoretical legitimacy of their process on researchers.

Qualitative research is based on the basic theories shaping this research on the basis of epistemology (e.g. Constructivism, epistemology realism). Secondly, adopted in their theoretical perspective (e.g. Biographical, social presentation), the qualitative research is to prime the area of research in theoretical knowledge and the use of theoretical assumptions related to the methods used in the study (Uwe Flick, 2011). The exploration of outdoor education, its hidden program, requires embedding of the subject of research in the sciences of sociology They are related to space in the context of human and pedagogical activity.

An extremely handy construction proved to be the theory of visual sociology and anthropology associated with its image. The visual sociology seems to be particularly suited for the research activities, interactions and the processes of communication and interpretation. Therefore, its usage in, so called, interpretative and interactionist sociology, seems to be necessary. Assuming, that the social world is constructed from interactions through successive definitions of the situation and there exists an agreement on these definitions by interacting people, context and eye-witnessing seem easy to be visualized. The common definitions of the situation and motives of actions can be read from gestures, glances, locating the physical situation, props, objects and also from the physical environment of photographed people (Gold, 1997; Konecki, 2012). The strength of methodology research as to the space of Outdoor Education in visual sociology allows us to analyze research material at the design stage of the research process in space and not only in the aesthetic, filling descriptive function, but also the socio-psychological enabling based on a theoretical basis to attempt to clarify the activity entered in the space, gestures in the context of the Outdoor.

# EDUCATION THEORY AND USING VISUAL METHODS TO EXPLORE EXPERIENCE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In the initial theoretical knowledge, a starting point is provided to explain the photographed area and the situation in the sense in which this role is seen for the sociology of Becker: the Sociological theory or the theory of a highly abstract situation, or on some empirical phenomenon with a set of concepts for understanding a photographed situations. In this theory, it is shown that the image contains information or a value that communicates something that is worth saying. The theory provides criteria to separate the valuable data and comments from these worthless to our knowledge about society (Becker, 1974). The theoretical base for the presented project, apart from analyzing the litera-

ture, the revision of materials provided by the Outdoor Education centers in Europe and in Poland (f.eg. Outward Bound'y, YMCA centers, associations and foundations as Laboratory Science and Adventure and Fun) was the knowledge acquired during the training for trainers, organized outdoor by the resort YMCA Sweden Vidablick in April 2016 in cooperation with Vidablick Sweden, YMCA Pilgrim Russia, Science Foundation and the Adventures of Polish and Buitendoor from Holland, the workshops during the meeting EOE- European Institute for Outdoor Adventure Education and Experiential Learning in Austria in September 2016, regular workshops Adventus # 8 in Ustanowek, as well as conferences on Education Adventure and Education Innovation. For the author described in a research paper, this knowledge has become a theoretical construction for the analysis of photography to the same extent as the sociological theories are analyzed by photographs. These photographers have already been mentioned: Becker and Konecki. Making the photos of groups and the situation of the researcher may be a strategy for research in qualitative sociology. This is about specific, conscious and deliberate actions of the researcher, it is the use of the camera in order to obtain specific visual materials in the research project, usually in the research field. That is how the task of documentary photography in sociology was seen by one of the creators of visual sociology Howard S. Becker. According to him, the knowledge of sociological theory gives a context for calls to and interpretation of visual documents of social life (Konecki, 2012). The theories, which Outdoor Education is based on (from basic, such as the cycle of Kolb, model Comfort-Stretch-Panic-Zone after going deeper into the issues concerning the work with the group as risk management, group process, evaluation of the work group on the Scale of Cooperation, switching elements, non Violent communication and transfer the responsibility for learning on the participants) were the starting point for the analysis of activity, and its relationship with the theory of place and space, retained on photographs taken by the author in the context of field studies and two participants mentioned at the outset situation of outdoor education.

The eye-centre trends, which the Western society has currently been affected by, and research specializations test methods are based on visual material and visual material studying - so the role of tools and / or research material. Sociologists, educators, anthropologists often use photos to confirm or falsify their thesis or research, focusing on studying the image of specific social groups in movies, television series, press materials. Social life in the twenty--first century is based on pictures and the short movies published on social networks. It is easy to have them instantly posted, also taking photos has increased from level of a service elite to universal, and even reached the status of routine daily activities, especially for the younger generation, which does not know life without access to the Internet. The more this trend fits in their lives, the more they employ the new-city lifestyle. The trend report about the 'new city men' completes their profile with some values that every time is strongly characterized by a new generation. The research team shows that 92% of the respondents consider the most important in their life do not to recognize

family but friends, for which they publish on average 38 194 photos on Instagram per minute (F5, 2014).

To this generation the term Generation Z is used - for those born after 1995. Technology gives them the background of everyday life, from its beginning. This generation is sometimes referred to as generation C - from the word connection or communicate due to the fact that they are constantly present in the network and through the social media. The virtual environment is the one in which they bring out their views and experiences. In the eyes of employers, this generation is characterized by demonstrating realism, materialism manifested, but at the same time ambitious and creative. They certainly take after the cell generation and iPhone (generation Y), they also take everything with 'I' at the beginning, Iphone, Itunes, Ipods. Besides, they are impatient, they need quick success. They are the first generation conscious in terms of meaning not the knowledge itself, and the ability to find and using an information. Knowledge itself is not a permanent value for them, as it becomes constantly obsolescent. This generation/s people are mobile, know foreign languages well and are open to a multicultural society (Rusak, 2013). Thanks to social media, in the communication, more than 350 trillion users across the globe publish 350 million photos a day on Facebook, 85 million images and videos on Instagram, 14 million "pins" on Pinterest, on which the portal 92% of posts is in the form of pictures (Lowe, 2016).

Photography has become a historical witness approach to time. Nineteenth--century photography concerned, for example, the time of the Nation. It contained a convention to present time and the passing of people, groups, nature or humanity in general. For amateur photographers of the twentieth century, time is depicted as individual or family member, a continuum of memory unit, predicting its future and stuff in duration, generally these are what H. Bergson called the durée (Walker, & Moulton, 1989). The clear signs of this trend can also be observed in the XXI century. The observation of the trends on photographs- the publication of them in books, albums in the pre-digital era towards the universal tool of communication and self-presentation can be regarded as a kind of descent of photographs from the public sphere to the private one, and analyzing the presented cases of the art. From these come the kind of sacred, in the direction of unreflective document. Moreover, each step is often dubious, aesthetics and more often in a kind of profane. However, the private photographs, always refer to some kind of meta dimension, namely, the temporality. The photographs are an extension or prosthesis of memory. They allow us to keep a certain point in time also keeping the specific situation. Photography creates a specific image in the present for the future of what will soon be the future (Konecki, 2005).

Let us see this vision of photography, with the awareness of its role and variable forms, but also the emotional content and intention of exercising them, all these in its new potential as a research tool. Civilization and its image, increasingly requires research methods that consistently use images. Eventually, in methods of data presentation and research proposals, where an important role is played by certain visual images of concepts and hypotheses (Konecki, 2005). This, which distinguishes a photo as a tool of photography, which is faced nowadays, is the way of its implementation or analysis. Photography, like any other image, as empirical evidence requires reading. The reading, is like seeing the image, making an interpretation (Konecki, 2005; Magala, 2000; Olechnicki, 2003). Interpretation can be done at different levels (Ferrarotti, 1993). The first is the artistic dimension, the second is a socio-psychological with interpretations which concern the level of subjective and interpersonal, when there exists an interest in the motives of human actions and their definitions of the situation. The third dimension is the dimension of historical and contextual, where the individual is located in the historical process, and the synthesis of idiographic aspect of normatism is followed there (Konecki, 2005; Ferrarotti, 1993). The fourth dimension, which also can be added here, is a cultural dimension. In this dimension, certain idioms, representations of specific subjects are reflected, not always consciously intended in the analyzed photographs. The fifth dimension is purely social, where the interpretation of characteristics for the social positioning of the people and subject photographed or the meanings of subjects becomes the center of sociological analysis (Konecki, 2005; Goffman, 1979). In the case of research on Outdoor Education the most important dimensions are: sociopsychologic, social and cultural.

In the present article the projected photograph appears in fact as a tool for a visual observation made by a researcher and visual perception of the same space and the events of participants activity. In both cases, the researcher is a part of the group recruited for these activities as a participant. According to the research, the methodical researcher of the terrain is usually close to the observed people, groups and situations. Using this method of observation, and thus the image of observation as a tool to analyse the situation, is necessary. The image makes it easier and more specific to interpret the context of the activities of the entity. Interpretation, interaction effects, the three basic concepts of interpretative sociology, can be resolved with the help of illustrating certain contexts and meanings, as well as actions and interactions in the image, such as a photographic or video recording (Gold, 1997; Konecki, 2005). At the stage of execution and analysis of photography, the work occurs on two levels - from the perspective of the researcher, based on the theories, there are some initial research questions and a list of topics of interest, that were planned and deliberated actions. However, from the perspective of people invited to participate in a research project, work with a camera was less formal. Participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study, received the disposable cameras and instructions to capture the most important moments for them during their stay at the camp. The use of an analogue camera with a limited capacity to 27 frames images was not accidental. Their decision about taking photos had to be considered.

Theoretical methodological framework included the division of research strategies:

photographs as the fundamental and deliberate research strategy;

- use of photographs of certain objects about social importance for analysis of materials already existing - photographs of the existing materials related to materials induced, it is with narratives and verbal comments made by respondents regarding the images shown;
- the use of photographs as evidence supporting applications, or as an illustration for the conclusions derived from studies in which the main data are verbal texts, or numerous representations and statistical data, where these three research strategies can also be used (Konecki, 2005). Due to the pilot nature of the research the author has chosen the first of these research strategies. In this field of studies can be used, at least two photographic research techniques: a photographic list of themes (shooting) scripts an intelligence wear photographs (photo-elicitation interview) (Collier, 1967; Olechnicki, 2003). In the research project determinants for photographic list of thematic scripts became the initial research questions:
  - How is the outdoor education space arranged?
  - What does the area of outdoor education look like?
  - What natural as well as arranged elements are present to organize this space?
  - What elements of the hidden curriculum are in the space also the activities of the participants?
  - What kind of "bottom-up" initiatives, individual and group are taken as part of OE?
- Responsibility
  - What are elements of space and actions that are manifestations of cultural values?
- Development of conducive skills to outdoor education space
  - What skills, cognitive, motor and emotional do the participants of OE develop?

For the author of a project, during observation participants constituted a form of photographic list of topics, in relation to photographs, made by the participants, these issues are categories according to which they are an analysis of the collected material.

# PRESENTATION OF PHOTOGRAPHS - RESEARCH RESULTS

Presentation of research material is in the form of a photographic list of themes. It is an enriched description of the events and the comment of the author of the researcher. Due to the fact, that outdoor adventure education is practiced in Poland, it has an innovative character, even a pilot one, and the main aim of the research is to describe good practices, practical indicators and a summary of the experience - a kind of know-how with this model of education. According to the order adopted for questions, first criteria for observation and analysis of photographs is the space of outdoor adventure education. Naturally, space is

created for needs of an outdoor education center, and the one that has been on this occasion "leased" is very different. A space, which features Buitendoor is a space adapted to specific types of activities, also at where the arrangement of the central role, played by the principles of sustainable development is displayed. There is a visible example built in the kitchen of the camp , where on the roof were built frames for future solar lamps (p. 1). Although at the stage of the location, the organization does not dispose of the means to buy them, a clear objective of the whole team is to gain them in the future. It should be considered, that things which decide about arrangements are variable determinants such as weather, available financial resources, number of people residing in a particular place at the same time and involved in the formation of it. The Place Low Rope Course is the center run by Caritas in Ustanowek.

Due to the nature of the activity, undertaken in both areas important are place, and sometimes even in the center of the event, the storage locations for equipment (p. 2, p. 3), evening meeting place (p. 4, p. 5), recreation in the open space (p. 6, p. 7), place for meals (p. 8, p. 9), coffee breaks (p. 10, p. 11) which are very significant. It is also important due to the natural elements, which can be found in the space, and an indication (in accordance with the theory of the hidden program), which means that space is movable - therefore possible to change under the influence of participants (p. 12, 13, 14, 15).



p. 10

From the perspective of the hidden program, making changes in space realise the principles that in model of outdoor adventure education, participants take responsibility for their education and the group process (p. 16, 17, 18).



p. 16

It this context there are certain cultural values, adjusted to religion and the role of history. In the Netherlands, before eating a meal, a moment of silence was announced. In Poland before a meal at the cafeteria was a time of prayer, which participants of Low Rope Course also passed in silence (p. 19, 20). During excursions to the nearby forest (around Nunspeed) the participants had the opportunity to visit reconstructed huts, where during World War II the partisans had been hiding (p. 21, 22).



p. 22

It was a canvas for later discussions, as a result of which, it turned out that the Dutch did not know much about the role of the Polish people during World War II, or the scale of cruelty that took place during the events of that period. Polish and Germans did not touch the topics of common historical past. One of the participants of the camp in the Netherlands had a very good assessment of the Polish natural areas. She owned some Polish coins, and her wish was to give them to a street artist. Among the Dutch you can observe a high need to share their skills, cultivate their hobbies. It was especially while music-making, playing instruments (a very popular ukulele) and singing (p. 23, 24).

The atmosphere was very relaxing. Even very young participants were treated very subjectively. Love was in the air, and there was no unrest about the organizers. Despite initial assumptions about the distribution of tents based on the sexes, everyone was sleeping where and with whom they wanted. To determine cultural imperialism, certainly deserves continuation of the preservation the division into male and female toilets, even in the field conditions (p. 25, 26).

An extremely important issue is to describe the potential competencies that participants acquired in the areas that have been adopted by Bloom's taxonomy (p. 26-40):



p. 39

Cognitive skills:

- theoretical knowledge about The Low Rope and the equipment used for its construction
- the use of foreign languages
- exploring of elements in history of the area
- exploring regulation of safety
- assessment of trees in terms of health, fitness for use as a structural element
- the naming of equipment
- rules for creating design (basic laws of physics)
- assessment of strength and fitness equipment
- rules for using assurance equipment.

Motor skills:

- knots
- creation of wooden structures
- use of tools, even at the height of (nails, ropes, levers)
- cooking in a field
- cleaning a camp and a workplace
- creating outdoor saunas
- work at heights
- climbing the trees
- washing and drying clothes in a field, in the rain
- preparing for the cold nights in a field
- sensible packaging
- crossing a park rope
- blind challenge, also on the ropes
- ticks removal.

Socio-volitional competence:

- working with a coach, instructor
- cooperation in teams of peers
- self-catering (preparing of shopping lists)
- taking additional challenges (external sauna, organization of games, playing the guitar, sharing the experiences)
- organizing games of integration and energizing the participants
- fight against the fear of heights
- overcoming own limitations (obesity, autism, physical fitness, language barrier, working with someone younger, older, from different cultural background)
- dealing with conflicts in the group
- coping with accidents
- taking responsibility for structures
- playing contradictory social roles at one time (to reconcile the role of mother and participant, researcher and participant, coach and participant)
- undergo stressful situations (eg. Exam with knowledge nodes)

- taking responsibility for own learning organization and activity
- working in small and large group
- setting personal goals
- public presentation
- being subjected to criticism.

Presented research according to methodological assumptions, took a form of a microutope and was assigned to appropriate categories designated by research questions. Participation in the presented study permit to indicate elements of good practices, ways of adapting and arranging space, as well as sensitizing to potentially difficult issue from the group processes perspective. The most important conclusion from the research is that the range of competences and skills acquired by participants of outdoor adventure education was indicated.

The collected research help to compare Dutch and Polish practice in the field of outdoor adventure education. For the researcher, an important aspect is looking at the social capital of the Dutch and Poles. Some differences in the style of participation in activities, awareness of having an influence on creating space and self-determination result from the way of socialization, self-awareness, but also from the economic potential of the societies of these countries. The set of values can be considered as hidden program of any nationality influences on the way of arranging the space, time and dynamics of taking or not taking certain activities, practices, showing active or passive attitudes. These manifestations are visible in outdoor adventure education activities, especially in the readiness to challenge by choice, arranging bottom-up activities and general readiness to engage in the educational process and a sense of responsibility for this process.

### PHOTOS:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1ZYzVPlK86fLTFSc1VKTXRKaDA/view

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