Von der Ablehnung zur Aneignung?

Das architektonische Erbe des Sozialismus
in Mittel- und Osteuropa

From Rejection to Appropriation?

The Architectural Heritage of Socialism
in Central and Eastern Europe

Herausgegeben von
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unter Mitarbeit von John Ziesemer

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A "Non-aligned" Identity

The Post-war Heritage in Croatia

Sandra Uskoković

"The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."
Milan Kundera, The Book of Laughter and Forgetting

Memory against Forgetting

The attitude towards the past is the key to numerous regional problems still remaining in the countries of former Yugoslavia, whose people lived almost the entire 20th century in one common state and learned one common history.

A view on the history and memory in former Yugoslavia ranges from victimisation to amnesia and even nostalgia. What these opposing positions have in common is their failure to recognise the full complexity of the phenomenon of collective memory and of the region's history of struggle over concepts of nation, political power, economic entanglement, and the contradictory lessons of the past. In recent decades, this region has experienced unforeseeable counter-trends of national historicism, followed by a denial of the recent past. On the basis of memory oblivion, the national narrative as a means of control developed using a selected memory for a desired ad hoc construction of identity.[1]

Socialist Realism in former Yugoslavia was short-lived because of the break with Stalin in 1948. Yugoslav socialism wanted to show the world its openness and readiness to officially incorporate contemporary tendencies in art, so many avant-garde projects appeared in all urban centres of Yugoslavia. Many artists raised this issue and attacked the dominant genre of memorial politics; they broke with realistic, figurative art, insisting instead on new art that signified a break with the political regime and announced new aesthetics. They denoted the trend that permitted an artist to articulate and legitimise a different political stance towards ideology. But this transition from socialism was complicated, hindered and interrupted by the war in the 1990s.[2]

In the early 1990s nationalism was replacing socialism, the ideological cement that had held the Yugoslav societies together. New political parties searched for and projected ideas of national, religious, political self-containment, exclusiveness and his-

1 Esbenshade, Richard S.: Remembering to Forget: Memory, History, National Identity in Postwar East-Central Europe. In: Representations 49 (1995), 72–96.

2 Erjavec, Aleš: Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition, Politicized Art under Socialism. Berkeley 2008, 1–54.

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torical authenticity while restoring religious and national identities based on pre-modern, patriarchal and rural values.[3]

Ontological uncertainty emerged in these societies, a kind of liminal state between socialism and a new political order where everything was open to question, uncertain and confusing. In such a socio-cultural space, national and folk culture has been rediscovered with the help of a retrospective mythology. In the unarticulated postulates of national rhetoric, the stability could have been obtained only through cultural homogeneity, i.e. through symbolic and actual exclusion of certain groups from society.[4] History was thus obliterated and has become a part of people's individual memory and personal mythology. The "new life" was basically marked by a return to national values and a "musealisation" of ethnicity, along with a blending of communist and nationalist sentiments.[5]

Since after the 1991–1995 war, Croatia has been managing its difficult, recent past not through its recognition but through concealment and cultural reframing, directing attention away from the war legacy. The decision to avoid the legacy of the 1991–1995 war was linked to a broader absence of state-sponsored commemoration throughout the country. As the other states created after the fall of socialist Yugoslavia, Croatia has deployed national symbols strategically to promote favourable images of its heritage abroad ("nation branding") and suppressed alternatives for other narrative performances. This emphasis on heritage in national ideology was elaborated in Erving Goffman's work on stigma management, which is defined as a strategy of covering and concealment rather than commemoration, and where there are no strong "agents of memory" other than the state to implement alternative versions of the past.[6]

Perception of Antifascist Heritage

The perception and valorisation of post World War Two heritage before the 1991–1995 war was primarily based on its historical and aesthetic significance. Being strongly supported and recognised by state officials, antifascist heritage was widely accepted among the public and formed a significant part of social life and values. Antifascist monuments were commissioned by the communist political elite and former Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito to commemorate sites where World War Two battles took place or where concentration camps stood. They were designed by famous sculptors (Dušan Džamonja, Vojin Bakić) and architects (Bogdan Bogdanović), conveying a

3 Erjavec 2008 (see note 2).

4 Niedermüller, Peter: Ethnicity, Nationality, and the Myth of Cultural Heritage: A European View. In: Journal of Folklore Research 36 (1999), Nr. 2/3, 1–54.

5 Panovski, Naum: New Old Times in the Balkans – the Search for a Cultural Identity. In: Journal of Performance and Art 28 (2006), Nr. 2, 61–74.

6 Rivera, Lauren A.: Managing Spoiled National Identity: War, Tourism and Memory in Croatia. In: American Sociological Review 73 (2008), 613–634.

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Fig. 1 Mostar, Partisan Memorial, built 1965. Photo 1970–1980s.

powerful visual impact in order to show the confidence and strength of the Socialist Republic. These monuments possessed a strong communicative and educational value that attracted millions of visitors every year. Such was the case with one of the most famous ex-Yugoslav architects, Bogdan Bogdanović, whose numerous unique memorial sites have always been developed out of the topography and landscape as places of thinking, recalling and contemplation, thus not being exclusively conceptualised as aesthetic objects (Fig. 1).[7] Bogdanović's antifascist memorials are devoid of any symbols of communism or other ideologies, and refreshingly different from Socialist Realism's monumental, figurative vocabulary (Fig. 2).

Another monument that has significant artistic value along with its memorial-commemorative value is the work of famous modernist sculptor Vojin Bakić at Petrova Gora, one of the most important antifascist monuments in the country.[8] The monu-

7 Subversive Urbanism: A transcendental alternative to Balkan reality: Bogdan Bogdanović, see: http://subversiveurbanism.tumblr.com/post/22802654170/a-transcendental-alternative-to-balkan-reality-bogdan (last accessed 29 April 2013).

8 Večernji list: Petrova gora – spomenik sramote [Petrova gora: monument of shame], see: http://www.vecernji.hr/kultura/petrova-gora-spomenik-sramote-clanak-468653 (last accessed 29 April 2013).

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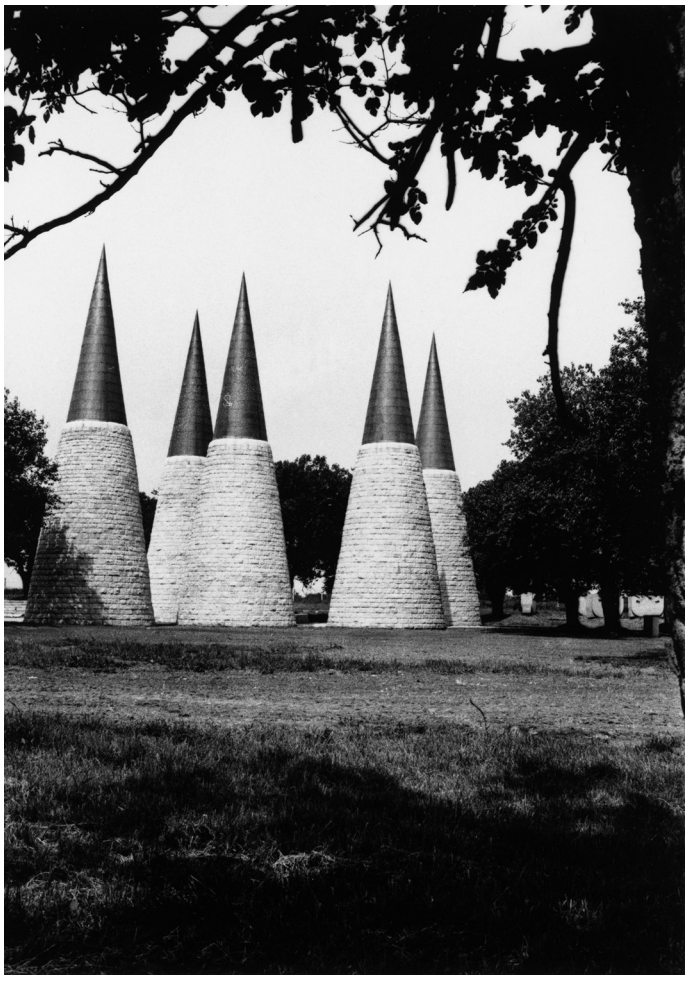


Fig. 2 Vukovar, memorial site Dudik, built 1980. Photo 1980s.

ment is an architectural/sculptural work, and its interior was home to the Museum of the Revolution, with an ethnographic collection, exhibition spaces, a library, and a multimedia hall (Fig. 3).

After the collapse of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, these monuments were completely abandoned and their symbolic meanings suppressed and obliterated. Modes of public commemoration towards post World War Two heritage have changed drastically and new ways to publicly deal with the old memorials tended to de-ideologise them, thus trying as well to erase the collective memory of the post World War Two period as explicit manifestation of the former political system and ideology. During the period between 1990 and 2000 almost half of the total number of antifascist monuments were destroyed. Furthermore, according to the order of the first Croatian president Franjo Tuđman and his idea of "national reconciliation" new funeral crosses were erected at the sites of destroyed antifascist monuments as a mutual memorial to

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Fig. 3 Petrova Gora, monument, built 1982. Photo by Marijan Crtalic, 2013.

all who had died in World War Two – partisans, fascists and civilians.[9] Such a symbolic "mixture of bones" of those who died for fascism and antifascism shuddered part of the public, while the majority of it accepted it with indifference.

However, during the recent decade a slow process of antifascist monument renovation started but only around 100 monuments have been restored, i.e. three per cent of the total number.[10]

Still, in order to restore each monument a great effort needs to be made, since the active strategy of the Ministry of Culture with respect to that matter is missing. Antifascism is only present in declarative form, without systematic politics of memory regarding the genocide or the national partisan movement. Croatia will have to face its past including this last chapter on the destruction of antifascist monuments instead of only doing a "cosmetic correction". Due to frequent requests for the removal of the partisan memorials from the National Register of Monuments (50 per cent of the antifascist memorials were destroyed or damaged during the 1991–1995 war, which caused the deprivation of their justification for protection) the Ministry of Culture

9 MÜLLER, Nils: Denkmal und Repräsentation: Alt und Neu in der Denkmalkultur. In: Erinnerungskultur in Dalmatien – Vom Parisanenkult zur Repräsentation der Nationalstaatlichkeit. Ed. by Bernd ROBIONEK, Nils MÜLLER and Marija VULESICA. Berlin 2010, 26–34.

10 Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, National Register of Monuments, see: http://www.min-kulture.hr/default.aspx?id=8275 (last accessed 29 April 2013).

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proposed a revision of the "partisan heritage" and its removal from the National Register in order to enlist it as a separate category, i.e. as "war heritage".[11]

Based on these requests, a discussion has been raised on the criteria of revalorisation of this type of legacy. However, the existing inventory list of antifascist monuments has been made without clearly defined criteria of valorisation and many of these monuments have not yet been listed. There is an opinion that a revalorisation of the history of the antifascist movement and struggle has to be done by historians rather than by conservators. Some officials in the Ministry of Culture are even suggesting the removal of damaged monuments from the Register as well as of those monuments that do not have any artistic significance. Still, most of the officials agree that a new revalorisation of the antifascist heritage needs to be done based on two criteria: historic and documentary significance and aesthetic and artistic significance. It is obvious that there is no unified policy on the protection of the antifascist heritage and that different opinions on this matter have to be conciliated. The meaning of the monument must be recovered by an accurate reconstruction of the cultural situation from which the object originated and the way in which a building as a cultural object in time is possessed, rejected, or achieved should be addressed.[12] Furthermore, there is a major obstacle for the protection of these monuments hidden in the exclusive perception of their significance through artistic values. This devalues the whole range of values present at these memorial sites.

It is obvious that during the last 20 years the collective memory of the post World War Two period has been rejected as a marker of the "former" system. The former Yugoslav legacy had been perceived either through amnesia or nostalgia. The question we are facing today is not only how to restore but also how to revitalise the antifascist legacy for future generations. These monuments are not only the markers of some remote past, but also the bearers of the universal values that are important today as well. Unfortunately, in all former wars in the entire region, along with ethnic cleansing, a memorial cleansing took place that was accompanied by indifference and ignorance resulting in a decontextualisation of the monuments.[13]

Transformative Power of Memory

Though many of them are still of stunning beauty, these obsolete monuments risk loosing their symbolic significance. It is obvious that their context has changed and new values need to be attributed in order to transform and restore their original mean-

11 Ministry of Culture of Republic of Croatia, National Register of Monuments, see: http://www.min-kulture.hr/default.aspx?id=8275 (last accessed 29 April 2013).

12 Hays, Michael, K.: Critical Architecture: Between Culture and Form. In: Perspecta 21 (1984), 14–29.

13 Kirn, Gal: Spomenici su dio jugoslavenskog emancipacijskog projekta [Monuments are part of the Yugoslav emancipatory project]. In: Novosti 670 (2012), see: http://www.novossti.com/2012/10/spomenici-su-dio-jugoslavenskog-emancipacijskog-projekta (last accessed 29 April 2013).

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Fig. 4 Zagreb, memorial site Dotrščina. Photo by Jadran Boban, 2012.

ing. A new living context for these monuments can be achieved with social and artistic actions that will attract a broader public along with the participation of the local community, though with a major dilemma: whether to socialise the monument through theoretical affirmation of antifascism or to economise it.

Some recent projects evidence the attempt to revitalise these monuments without governmental financial support, and therefore rely on a very low budget and the enthusiasm of a few activist groups.

The Petrova Gora monument partially survived the iconoclastic storm of the 1990s, but its slow devastation has been ongoing for almost two decades. Recently, a project of renovation and rehabilitation of this monument has started along with artistic and activist activities in order to revitalise this site. The approach is based on the decision not to view what has happened to the monument as a trauma or an infrastructural problem, but to look at the question of works of art in public spaces.

The second project for the revitalising of antifascist memorial monuments and for raising public awareness is the creation of the virtual museum Dotrščina in Zagreb. The memorial park Dotrščina was originally designed in the 1960s by landscape architect Josip Seissel.[14] There are five representative monuments within the boundaries of the park designed by famous modernist sculptors. This memorial park is enlisted on the National Register but most people are not aware of its significance or which

14 Virtual Museum Dotrščina, Zagreb, see: http://www.dotrscina.hr/ (last accessed 29 April 2013).

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Fig. 5 Memorial site Dotrščina – artistic intervention. Photo by Jadran Boban, 2012.

historic event is related to this park. The virtual museum of Dotrščina is actually a website that provides basic information about the site and related events. The museum was launched in 2012 and a temporary landscape intervention was held in this park with the intention to show visually and in a symbolic way the amount of killings that happened here during World War Two. It is estimated that 7,000 people were killed and therefore the intervention symbolically contained 7,000 elements in order to show the scale of the tragedy, which is almost forgotten today. Each of the 7,000 white ribbons is tied around a tree as an attempt to develop a culture of memory by promoting contemporary ways of marking the memory in public space by involving contemporary artistic production (Figs. 4, 5). The idea is to have temporary artistic exhibitions/interventions each year in this park which would contribute to its revitalisation.

The third ongoing project is the plan for the revitalisation of the monument located on Katalinić' hill in Split (Fig. 6). This monument was built in 1958 and it is enlisted on the National Register. It served as a light-house and afterwards as a funeral tomb

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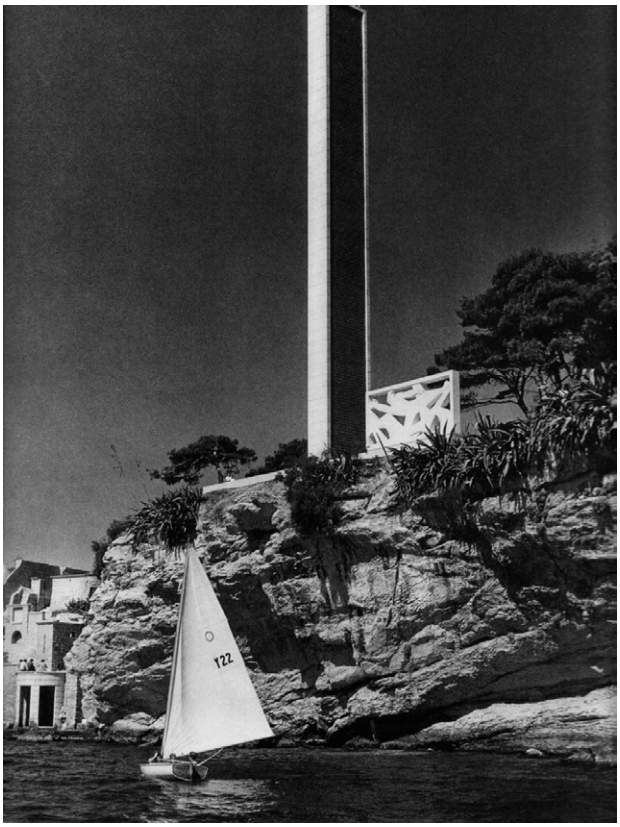


Fig. 6 Split, monument on Katalinić Hill, built 1958. Photo 1960–1980s.

for a deceased sailor who died during World War Two in antifascist struggle.[15] In 1991 the monument was bombarded by the Yugoslav army and since then it had been in a state of decay and rapid degradation. The monument is covered with a relief showing the battle of the sailor with the sea (Fig. 7). Its symbolic significance is not only in its antifascist connotation but it can also be defined as a tribute and in memory to all deceased sailors in the Adriatic Sea. The proposal for its revitalisation consists of an interactive platform placed in the vicinity of the monument with a touch-sensitive screen where visitors can leave and write their messages or drawings which will be projected on the surface of the monument. This interactive approach is focused on connecting people by erasing spatial obstacles between the monument and the people and by enabling them to freely intervene with the monument. Furthermore, the interactive messages and drawings on the screen will be projected and visible from remote places in the city and therefore quite transparent.

15 1 Posto za umjetnost [One percent for Art], see: http://1postozaumjetnost.wordpress.com/texts/ (last accessed 29 April 2013).

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Fig. 7
Monument on Kamenjak Hill – detail of relief, built 1958. Photo 2010.

Though the slow process towards the integration and revitalisation of the antifascist heritage has recently started, some other trends towards new monuments and memorials show how contested the nature of heritage is. After all, heritage is the best example that in some ways always represents conditions of conflict in space, as the very tool and consequence of politics. For example, the reconstruction of the Old Bridge in Mostar by using the facsimile method was an attempt to reconcile the antagonism of a divided city and to unify it – unfortunately, this never happened. The question is which identity is trying to be re-established with this type of falsifying history. New memory places that present national identity today occupy public spaces such as in the case of a contemporary war memorial built in 2006 close to the Old City walls in Dubrovnik (Fig. 8). This causes conflicting views and opinions within the community, creating a division between those who are linked to this memory place and those who are not and thus becoming an example of contested heritage. Such identification with the power of the nation state produces "images of representation" using heritage as a social-political resource.

There is too much memory in the Balkans, too many pasts from which people can draw, usually as a weapon against the past of someone else. Whenever memory is invoked we should be asking ourselves: by whom, where, in which context, against what? On the one hand, cynicism and mistrust pervade all social, cultural and even personal exchanges so that the construction of civil society, much less civil memory is very difficult. On the other hand, there are multiple memories and historical myths that form powerful counter-histories of a mutually antagonistic and divisive nature.[16] Thus, instead of being integrated, memory is uprooted and detached from life, collected and produced as a way to express its unifying nature.

There is a passage in the text "Transformative Power of Memory" by Aleida Assmann that depicts and illustrates how trauma can defy the public acceptance of mem-

16 Esbenshade, Richard S.: Remembering to Forget: Memory, History, National Identity in Postwar East-Central Europe. In: Representations 49 (1995), 72–96.

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Fig. 8
Dubrovnik, New War Memorial, built 2006. Photo 2010.

ory: "The form of politics of memory is not defined by covering and concealment but by its 'opening' as a subject in social space and by public acceptance. Trauma has a special affinity towards silence. Defensive silence serves to avoid punishment – such are all variants of silence: lie, excuse, and denial".[17] As long as silence is the prevailing mode of dealing with the past, memory will be used as a generator of manipulation and instrumentalisation of society's consciousness instead of as a corrective in the formation of a critical and polemical position towards the dominant forms of consciousness.[18]

Zusammenfassung

Wegen des bereits 1948 vollzogenen Bruchs mit Stalin war der Sozialistische Realismus im ehemaligen Jugoslawien nur von sehr kurzer Dauer. Der jugoslawische Sozialismus war seither bestrebt, der Welt seine Offenheit und die Bereitschaft zur Integration zeitgenössischer Kunsttendenzen in die Staatsrepräsentation zu zeigen. Dementsprechend ist die Formensprache vieler antifaschistischer Denkmäler frei von Symbolen des Kommunismus oder anderer Ideologien, und sie steht in einem erfrischenden Kontrast zum monumentalen figürlichen Vokabular des Sozialistischen Re-

17 Assmann, Aleida: Transformativna snaga sjećanja. In: Opasna sjećanja i pomirenje. Ed. by Srđan Sremac, Zoran Grozdanov and Nikola Knežević. Rijeka 2011, 195–213.

18 Rivera, Lauren A.: Managing Spoiled National Identity: War, Tourism and Memory in Croatia. In: American Sociological Review 73 (2008), 613–634.

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alismus. Mit ihrer hohen künstlerischen Qualität und starken pädagogischen Wirkung zogen diese Denkmäler Jahr für Jahr Millionen von Besuchern an.

Mit dem Zerfall Jugoslawiens in den frühen 1990er Jahren setzte ein rapider Verfall der antifaschistischen Monumente und zugleich die Verdrängung ihrer Botschaften aus dem öffentlichen Bewusstsein ein. Im Zuge einer radikal gewandelten offiziellen Erinnerungspolitik an den Zweiten Weltkrieg und der gleichzeitigen negativen Bewertung der Nachkriegsära wurden sie marginalisiert und als Ausdruck des früheren politischen Systems gebrandmarkt. Zwischen 1990 und 2000 wurde fast die Hälfte der antifaschistischen Denkmäler zerstört. Im Laufe des letzten Jahrzehnts setzte allerdings ein langsamer Prozess der Restaurierung dieses Erbes ein. Davon konnten bisher etwa 100 Denkmäler profitieren – das sind drei Prozent des Gesamtbestands. Ein Hindernis bei diesen Bemühungen ist die Beschränkung der Wahrnehmung auf den Kunstwert, bei der ein breites Spektrum weiterer Denkmalwerte ausgeblendet bleibt.

Deshalb stellt sich heute nicht nur die Frage, wie die Denkmäler restauriert werden können, sondern auch, wie sich das von ihnen vermittelte antifaschistische Erbe für die künftigen Generationen wiederbeleben lässt. Denn sie sind nicht nur Zeugnisse der Geschichte, sondern auch Träger universeller Werte, die bis heute nichts an Aktualität verloren haben. Ein Mittel zur Revitalisierung dieser Stätten sind soziale und künstlerische Interventionen, die ein breites Publikum anziehen und die lokale Bevölkerung aktivieren.

Die Wahrnehmung des jugoslawischen Erbes war in den letzten Jahrzehnten vorwiegend entweder durch Amnesie oder durch Nostalgie bestimmt. Solange aber Amnesie, also das Schweigen, die vorherrschende Art des Umgangs mit der Vergangenheit ist, werden Erinnerungen instrumentalisiert und zur Manipulation der Gesellschaft missbraucht, anstatt als Korrektiv bei der Herausbildung kritischer und streitbarer Positionen zu fungieren.

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