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THE FEATURES OF AESTHETIC EDUCATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF VISUAL LANGUAGE OF ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS

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Abstract. This work emphasizes some theoretical and practical provisions of aesthetic education, which have an important role in the development of visual language of architecture students. The principle of integrating scientific knowledge and creative skills ensures the success of the architecture student, valuing language as a tool used in free expression. One of the solutions refers to the analysis of the architectural context and project development based on visual language skills, and brainstorming, an idea-generating activity, can be taken as a method. Another solution would be to encourage students to take responsibility for the transmission of visual language from the perspective of aesthetic values. Taking on the role of a future architect by developing analytical skills and conveying aesthetic values, the student gains experience in modelling space and effectively conveying visual images of architectural edifices.

Keywords: *aesthetic education, theory of aesthetic education, practice of aesthetic education, development of visual language, architecture students.*

Rezumat. În lucrare se examinează unele opinii teoretice și practice ale educației estetice, care au un rol important în dezvoltarea limbajului vizual al studenților-arhitecți. Principiul integrării cunoștințelor științifice și al abilităților creative asigură succesul studentului-arhitect, punând în valoare limbajul ca instrument folosit în exprimarea valorilor estetice. Una dintre soluții se referă la analiza contextului arhitectural și dezvoltarea proiectelor pe baza abilităților de limbaj vizual, iar brainstorming-ul, o activitate generatoare de idei, poate fi luată ca metodă. O altă soluție ar fi încurajarea elevilor să-și asume responsabilitatea pentru transmiterea limbajului vizual din perspectiva valorilor estetice. Asumând rolul unui viitor arhitect prin dezvoltarea abilităților analitice și transmiterea valorilor estetice, studentul dobândește experiență în modelarea spațiului și transmiterea eficientă a imaginilor vizuale ale clădirilor arhitecturale.

Cuvinte-cheie: *educație estetică, teoria educației estetice, practica educației estetice, dezvoltarea limbajului vizual, studenți-arhitecți.*

1. Introduction

This study investigates practices that analyse the predominant range of visual tools used by architecture students, as well as the appropriate methods of developing visual language. The problem of developing the visual language, necessary in the free and professional expression of architecture students, is becoming more and more topical. The importance given to the specific methods of aesthetic education, used in the educational process, should include not only the training of some skills, but also the development of the visual language, being a tool of great value in the intellectual and professional training of architecture students.

In the view of Eftenie M., professor at the University of Architecture and Urban Planning „Ion Mincu” from Bucharest (UAUIM), the improvement of means of communication and the use of visual language in architecture *makes it necessary to establish a common code with a possibility of overcoming the language gap* [1].

In specialized literature, the architecture is defined as the art of creating aesthetic, harmonious places and spaces for people, at the same time, being approached as *a form of visual language* [2 – 4]. The meaning of a building arises from and depends on the understanding of its parts and its whole. Elsewhere, the visual language of architecture indicates the function of buildings in society: either individual, public or cultural, fixing the position within the complex, depending on the site nature. We find that the language gives shape to groups of buildings, highlighting a stylistic change from one era to another, which remains to be known through the plastic character of each architectural edifice and its urban location. At the same time, the architectural signs through the monumentality and plasticity of the building, through the details, elements, emblems and various architectural symbols inform us what type of building we are looking at.

Visual language and its nature as a form of communication is considered *a product of evolution*, and the whole system – *the fruit of the creative ability of the person himself* [5]. In this vein, the architecture students can inform themselves, create and express the phenomena of the built space.

Initiating the architecture students in the theory of aesthetics helps the acquisition of basic theoretical as well as practical knowledge, assisting them to receive and appreciate aesthetic values. In our opinion, the formation and development of the visual language of architecture students can be achieved by capitalizing on the theoretical and practical features of aesthetic education.

2. Theories and methods

According to the dictionary, the word *aesthetics* originating from the Greek language *aisthetikos* means *the study of sensory experience* [6]. It should be noted that contemporary aesthetics is concerned with the analysis of certain concepts related to art, such as artwork, symbolic shapes, artistic image, meaning, aesthetic values (the beautiful, the ugly, the comic) and others.

Depending on the disciplines, subjects and themes of the educational process for architectural students, the aesthetic methods as ways of research, theory, learning, achievement proposed by the scientific literature are the next: *observation, discovery, exercise, didactic game, case study, document study, problematization, demonstration, pragmatic training, brainstorming, etc., expository or conversational methods, methods centered on sensory exploration, on investigation* [7, 8].

According to Cerghit I., the method represents *a way of active assimilation of a system of new knowledge, skills and abilities, etc.; a way that makes the educated rediscover the truth and finding the necessary solutions in solving the theoretical and practical problems they face in the learning process* [9].

In the view of the Cristea S., *the methodology specific to aesthetic education capitalizes on the training resources of the educational process designed, realized and developed within the university disciplines directly (philosophy, plastic arts, literature, socio-human sciences, etc.) or indirectly (mathematics, physics, biology, etc.)* [10]; *specific artistic and extracurricular subjects* [11].

We also subscribe, without any hesitation, that the main source of aesthetic development is art, an idea also supported by Saleev V. [12], Cucoş C. [13], Adorno Th. [14], Read H. and others [15].

In the same vein, we support the idea that the formation and development of the visual language will help the architecture student *to synthesize through the specific means of art the essence of an era, to crystallize and fix in the built works the defining elements of civilization, promoting quality architecture, building real lasting, defining cultural landmarks* [16].

Aesthetic education in higher education in the Republic of Moldova, at the architecture specialty is privileged through the lens of artistic disciplines and activities, with the aim of developing imagination and creative potential, developing the ability to observe, forming aesthetic sensibility and artistic options, etc. Conceived in this way, aesthetics is a formative intellectual activity, because its object of study is the *Aesthetic Man (Homo aestheticus)*, part of - *the Emotional Man (Homo emotionalis)*, as stated by Aslam C., *the man who lives and who aims to live even more intensely by producing special kinds of artefacts, called art objects* [17].

According to Saleev V., aesthetic activity represents *a specific type of practical activity* (creation of artwork, folklore, design, etc.), *spiritual* (aesthetic contemplation, aesthetic perception, aesthetic judgment) and *creative* (utilization of visual language) [12]. Therefore, the aesthetic education of the architecture student is a process that takes place under the influence of art and the disciplines that are part of the given field. In the framework of practical educational activities, *Drawing, Painting, Sculpture*, and theoretical - *Basics of composition and Colorism*, the student manifests his creative attitude, representing the architectural phenomenon through the lens of his own visual language, not knowing the objective reality of the space. Two aspects appear in aesthetic education: a) in the university environment (in the given case the student is put in contact with aesthetic phenomena in the fields of art) and b) outside the institution (actions in the built space). So, through various case studies, numerous outings in the plein air, the future architect approaches the aesthetics of buildings and architectural space, and by continuously experimenting, he becomes more and more literate in the use of visual language aiming at the variety of architectural forms. Spatial and architectural analysis facilitates the identification of syntactic structure, so that the representation of architectural objects and forms can be rendered by the architecture student as a phrase in a certain visual language. This formative process is achieved by capitalizing on techniques for the formation and development of visual language that can be modified according to one's own aesthetic tastes. For architecture students, the goals of aesthetic education are important, which include the formation and development of visual perception (perception of form and aesthetic content), the development of aesthetic attitude and sensitivity. We think that a first step in this direction consists in the implementation of group creative activities (workshops, master-classes, exhibitions, creative camps, etc.), and the next step concerns the involvement of students in individual creative activities (exercises

in visual aesthetic perception), activities to create new ideas through graphic images, self-development, etc.). More than that, for example, familiarizing the student with *the architectural heritage of the Republic of Moldova* promotes both the formation and development of the visual language (symbolic content, plastic, artistic, technical means) and the promotion of aesthetic values (sensitivity to the preferences given to certain forms traditional, capitalizing on harmony and complex aesthetic order aiming at architectural significance).

In the view of the Țărnă E. [18], *the language of space must be intercepted simultaneously according to 5 dimensions: size, height, closeness-distance, inside-outside, degree of intimacy*, which is characteristic of sensing architectural forms.

In the same vein, the author Saint-Martin F. claims that the formation and development of visual language is a complex and different approach, teaching us a semiological analysis that must necessarily be done through direct contact with the work, which will activate the state psychic and emotional of the individual through the energy of tones, colours, proportions and mathematical sizes [19]. These approaches are based on the phenomenon of visual perception, moving from the contemplation of the work to its understanding. The process of formation and development of visual language is called "visual lecture" by Matei D., Barbosa O., Mocanu T., Tănase Al., meaning being able to ensure the active transmission of coded information at the level of perception aesthetics "as an exclusively individual act in an intersubjective language" [20].

Hagan C., argues that through drawing we *develop an extended language of visual communication of thoughts, ideas and issues, which, being exhibited on a two-dimensional surface and through the choice of subject itself, acts as a catalyst for research in other subject areas* [21].

In this context, the position of Cerghit I., which brings to attention the method based on real experience – *the case study*, and its three characteristic types:

- the situation method (in the given case, the student receives complete information about the architectural phenomenon or about a certain subject that needs to be studied);
- the incident method (the student receives incomplete information to solve the problem of the architectural phenomenon or the proposed subject);
- the individual study (the architecture student is proposed concrete tasks to solve without receiving any information) [22].

Noticing the importance of the stated approaches, we must mention that the value of aesthetic education for the formation and development of visual language also belongs to the *traditional method, which is replaced by a rigorous sociological investigation of the procedures and intellectual foundations of sign systems inextricably linked to both the set of values, as well as the whole of reality, representing the amount of all relationships between subject and object, past, future, experiences, emotions, fantasies, etc.*, as the Romanian philosopher L. Grünberg states [20].

3. Materials and methods

The research experiment carried out in the academic years 2019-2020, on an experimental batch of 60 architecture students, cycle I, years of study II (55%), III (45%), within the Architecture program, Faculty of Urbanism and Architecture, Technical University of Moldova (UTM) allowed us to obtain information real aiming at the degree of development of the visual language in the context of the knowledge of aesthetic values. A questionnaire with 10 items was used as a study method. The evaluation questionnaire proposed to

architecture students allows to ascertain the level of development of the visual language in the context of the knowledge of aesthetic values. The students were asked to think about each aesthetic value separately and make a differentiation, checking with a "V" next to the sentence, in the box with the number corresponding to the level of confirmation: 1 – totally agree; 2 - neutral; 3 - disagree. Corresponding to those addressed, the total of each subscale is made, and the lowest score obtained indicates the high level of visual language development.

The students' answers to the following items indicate the comparative results according to the university level at which the architect-students are:

- 1) contemplating the sublime architectural edifices, different innovative ideas come to my mind for the creation of new architectural forms;
- 2) any sensation created by architectural harmony and beauty reveals different aesthetic sides of the visual language used;
- 3) the ideal of architectural beauty arouses aesthetic judgments;
- 4) the aesthetic is easier to perceive in architecture.

4. Research and results

The interpretation of the experimental results following the implementation of the questionnaire allowed highlighting the level of development of the visual language in the context of the knowledge of aesthetic values by the architecture students, Figure 1. Therefore, after applying the given questionnaire, it is observed that the architecture students have a low level of visual language development in the context of knowing aesthetic values, taking into account that the majority of the architecture students in the control group responded to these four items, scoring the variant of two - neutral. As we can see from Figure 1, for item 1 we recorded 65.0%, for item 2 – 50%, for item 3 – 58.3%, for item 4 – 15%.

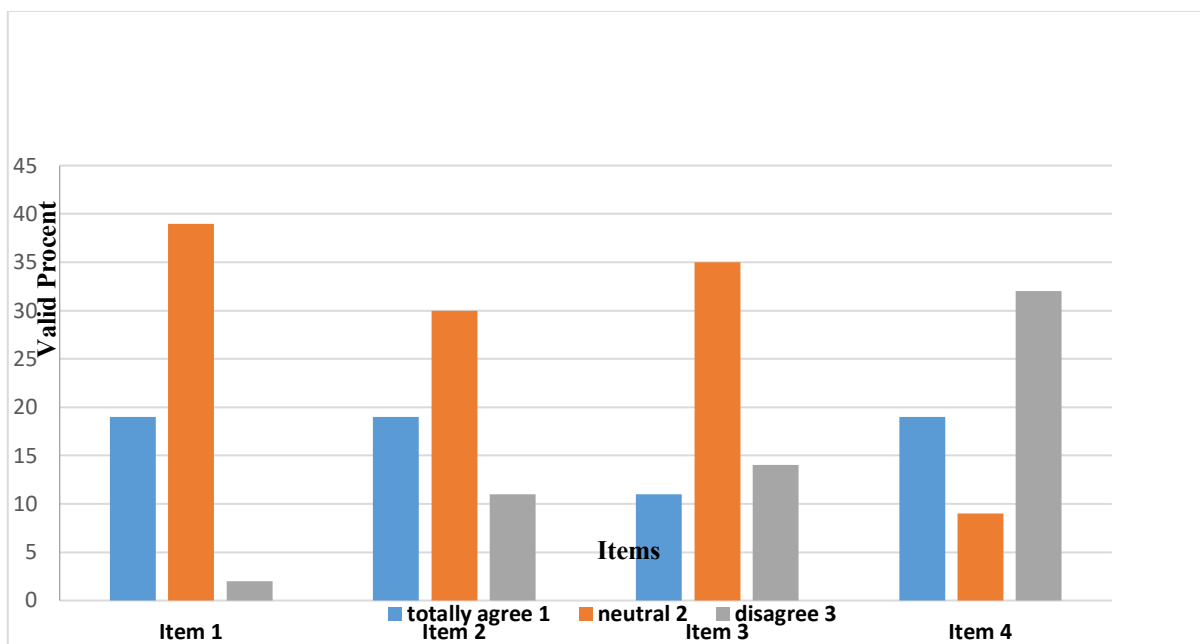


Figure 1. Comparative results regarding the level of visual language development in the context of knowing aesthetic values.

Starting from artistic disciplines as sources of content in aesthetic education, the next step is to find how practical methods are chosen and organized to provide the most effective instructional program for the purpose of visual language development. Next, we present the

case study aimed at the development of the visual language of architecture students, taking as an example the following buildings proposed as subjects of analysis: the Triumphal Arch in Chişinău, the Metropolitan Cathedral "Naşterea Domnului", the National Theatre "Mihai Eminescu", the Organ Hall, the Central Post Office, the Chişinău City Hall. The architecture students must resort to a structured and specialized approach, taking into account the following stages:

1. *Initial stage* – survey of the edifice and the architectural space with all the changes made over time, the function of the construction (analysis of the proposed subject, degree of representativeness, selection and structuring of information about the object of study).

2. *Experimental stage* – graphic practice using the plastic, artistic and technical means of the visual language (identification of the visual language and the architectural context).

3. *Conceptual stage* – presenting the diversity of conceptual ideas through visual images, arguing the present study.

By studying the architectural edifices that are framed in the natural space of Chisinau, the architecture student, going out into the open air, explores both the aesthetic forms and the problems of reality. At the same time, it examines architectural variations and changes to illustrate the qualities of the visual language used, Figure 2.

Analysing the built object, the architecture students must recognize architectural symbols, taking into account the following objectives:

- to comparatively analyse the changes of the construction made over time;
- to identify the architectural character and style depending on the area, era, country, culture, etc.;
- to analyse the representative elements of architectural forms;
- to discover the mathematical relationships of shapes;
- to compare various proportions, sizes, etc.;
- to recognize the combinations between the plastic means (shape, line and colour) and the artistic ones of the visual language;
- appreciate linear perspective and aerial perspective;
- specify the position of the architectural object in a certain space;
- to identify the material and work techniques;
- to determine architectural similarities and differences;
- to recognize the architectural context and be aware of the symbolic importance;
- to determine the problems regarding the architectural construction;
- to graphically represent the solution;
- to evaluate the message sent through the visual language in relation to the reception of aesthetic values.

The results of the case study allowed us to identify the level of knowledge of the visual language of the architecture students: high level – 11.7% (7 students clarified the problem according to the objectives described above), medium level – 23.3% (14 students completed only the theoretical part, not being sure in the graphic representation of the building), low level - 65.0% (39 students did not respect the requirements formulated by the teacher, the rules of graphic representation of the building, did not apply various procedures for using the elements visual language). Both the results of the questionnaire and the case study attest the low level of visual language development of the architecture students.

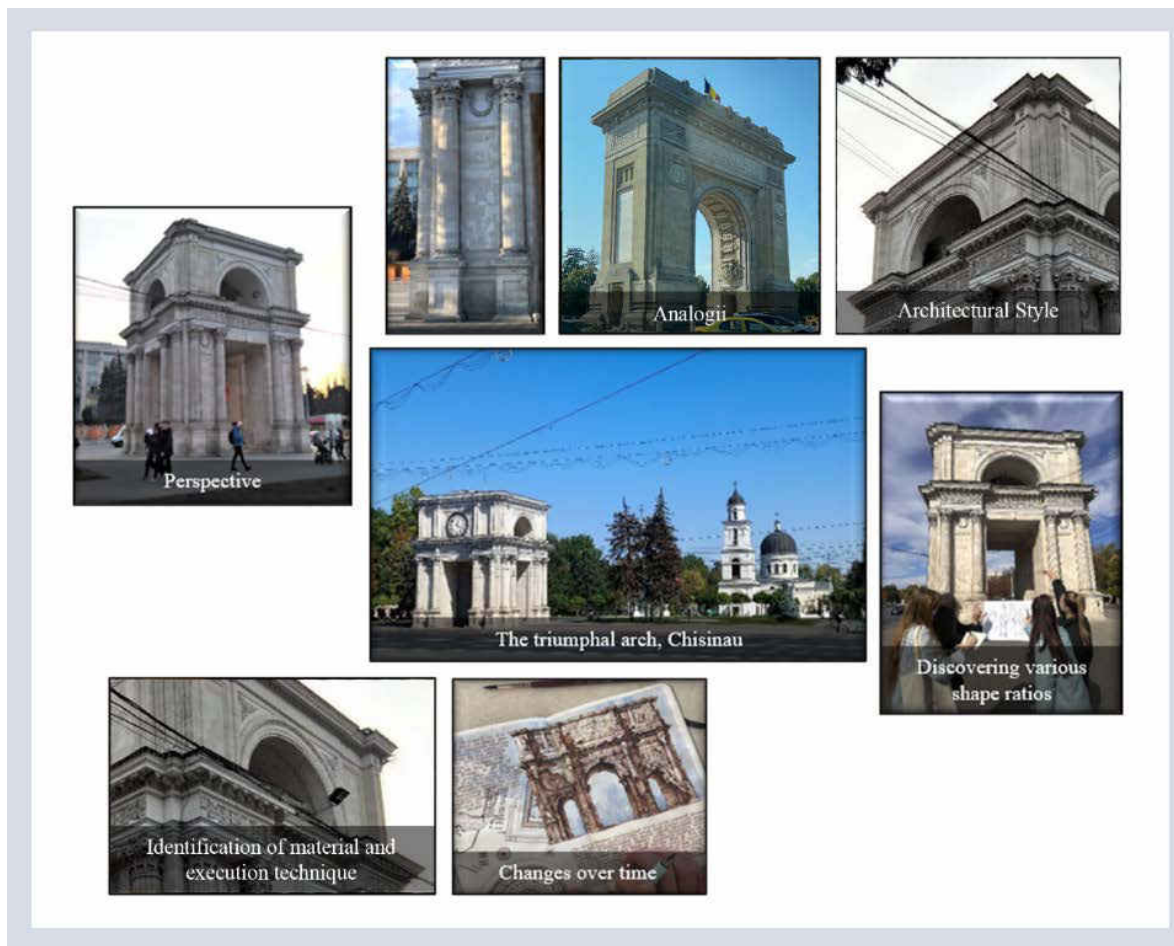


Figure 2. Representative images regarding the development of visual language in architecture students.

(Case Study).

At the same time, the basis of these practical activities focused on analysis and observation stimulates attention, interest in the architectural object or phenomenon of the architecture students, who must be trained to "see the object" (not simply look at it), to observe it directed with a specific purpose.

Following the investigations and the case study carried out regarding the architectural space, students consciously perceive the form and context of language, object function, volume, structure, texture, similarities, differences between objects and cultural values. At the same time, they get to know the elements of the building's visual language (line, shape, colour, etc.), with the technical and artistic means used (proportion, symmetry, asymmetry, rhythm, balance, etc.). This process encompasses a series of photo fixations of the architectural construction as an extensive visual representation.

We specify that the students in the experimental group had the chance to practice the object evaluation model according to the author Saleev V. [12, p. 9], which considers aesthetics as a holistic system, including the three main sections: 1) *the nature of the aesthetic evaluation object*; 2) *the nature of the subject of aesthetic attitude, the structure of aesthetics and the forms of aesthetic consciousness*; 3) *the nature of artistic value, activity and artistic appreciation*, Figure 3.

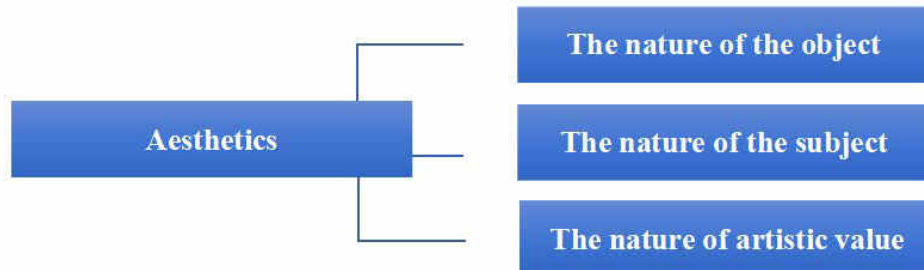


Figure 3. Object evaluation and the three main sections of aesthetics.

In particular, we are of the opinion that the study of the quality of the development of visual language of the architecture students depends on the solution of the creative and graphic process, which we represent through the diagram in Figure 4.

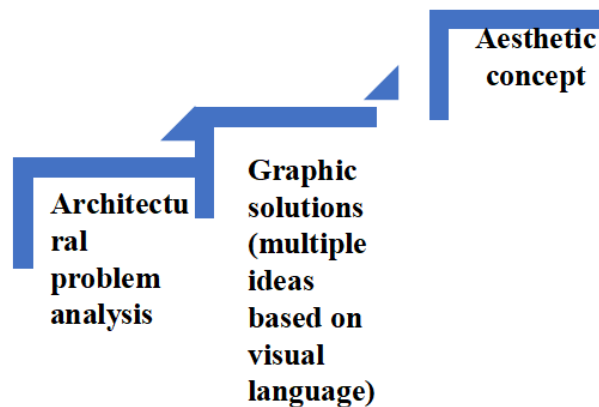


Figure 4. Aesthetic experience.

Generalizing the ideas presented, we mention that aesthetic education includes the experience of visual language development. In agreement with what has been reported, we support the idea that this process enhances the creation of the architectural object, contributes to the appreciation and awareness of aesthetics. Therefore, future architects resort to the analysis of historical and cultural tradition, applying the knowledge gained to characterize the architecture of a people or an era, etc. From the researched literature, we conclude that aesthetic education must be included in the process of professional training of architecture students.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

One of the solutions we propose relates to the analysis of the architectural context and the development of the project based on the visual language skills, and brainstorming, an idea-generating activity, can be taken as a method. For example, the architecture student exposes the problem related to the architectural edifice and generates discussions based on the drawing, stating ideas that would solve the unclear aspects of the existing architectural edifice. We note in particular, that both the design of visual images (sketches, croquis, drawings, studies, drafts, etc.) and the collaboration through creative experimentation of an aesthetic reality are important for architecture students.

We also mention that architecture students use drawing as a means of aesthetic expression, which stimulates reflection, evoking a constructive critical analysis, but also a synthesis of everything they observe. In this regard, through drawing the architecture students express their thoughts, ideas, problems, exposing the architectural subject under discussion, which acts as a catalyst for the development of visual language.

Another solution proposed by us relates to encouraging students to assume responsibility in the transmission of visual language from the perspective of aesthetic values. Assuming the role of a future architect by developing analytical skills and transmitting aesthetic values, the student gains experience in modelling space and effectively transmitting visual images of architectural edifices.

Moving from the sphere of methods to that of professional training perspectives, we conclude that the architecture students have to produce aesthetic architectural edifices. In this regard, we find relevant the disciplines: *Study of form, Painting, Sculpture, Basics of composition and Colourism, Creative Practice*, etc., which will help them gain experience regarding the formation and development of visual language.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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