

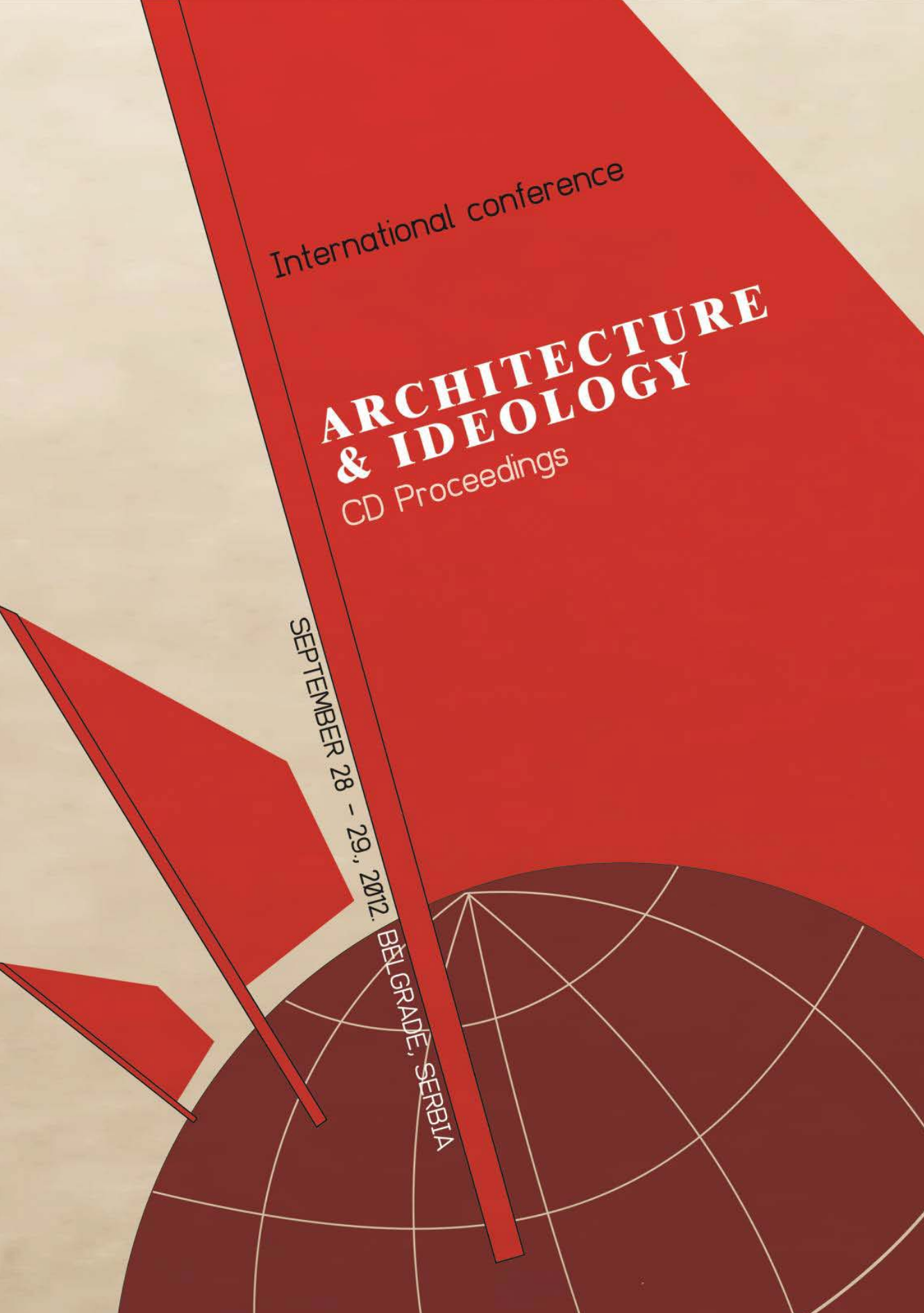
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## **INFLUENCE OF SOCIALIST IDEOLOGY ON TYPOLOGICAL MODELS OF MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING UNITS**

### **“BELGRADE SCHOOL” OF HOUSING ARCHITECTURE**

#### **Abstract |**

The paper explores the ideological influences in the period of the socialist system on the design of the typological models of residential units built in Belgrade. After the Second World War, one of the main policy goal of socialism was to solve the housing problems of Belgrade, by building the modern, serially manufactured and economical housing architecture. The period of intensive construction of housing architecture of Belgrade in the period of socialist self-management is defined by the term "Belgrade School" of housing architecture and it is primarily related to the achieved quality of housing in this period in terms of functional organization. This paper explores new concepts and principles of the "Belgrade School" of housing architecture with the emphasis on the impact of spatial-functional apartment transformation on the family lifestyle and the formation of a new socialist culture of dwelling. Since the problem of housing is interdisciplinary, the transformation is studied out through detecting the relations of cause and effect among ideological social changes, culture of habitation, technical and technological criteria and functional-spatial house structure. The evolution of "Belgrade school" of housing architecture has become a representation of social, political, economic, demographic and cultural changes of the period.

#### **Key words |**

multi-family housing, Belgrade, functional organization, socialism, representation, dwelling culture

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The form and structure of housing is primarily conditioned by social-political and economic circumstances, housing culture as well as the construction technology. In the context of ideology, an analysis of a housing unit should be observed as a category of the standard and conditions of living, a class-social category, as well as a category of economizing in a sense of general urbanization. The hierarchy of these categories depends on the social structure and social classes' understanding. In the conditions of a socialist society, all the above mentioned categories were mainly integrally present and expressed in the notion of the housing policy.

This paper researches housing concepts as a representation of the policy of decentralization and the context of the self-management socialism ideology in Yugoslavia. The paper is focused on the analysis of the development of the apartment in view of its "content and concept", and an accent is put on the influence of the transformation of the spatial-functional structure of the apartment on a family's life, i.e. on the formation of a new socialist culture and a style of living. In the period between the two world wars, not a single settlement or a larger urban area of housing with modern, serially built, economic apartments was built in Belgrade. Only in the socio-political conditions after the Second World War was it possible to achieve this goal and find a solution to the housing issue in Belgrade. Without any previous examples which might have served as samples to rely on, the postwar architecture was forced to create new concepts of housing construction from the very beginning, which completely followed the given economic and social conditions of the new socialist state. [1]

## **2. SOCIALIST IDEOLOGY AND HOUSING**

### **2.1. The housing policy in the context and conditions of forming a socialist ideology**

The fundamental starting-point of the housing policy in self-management socialism was that the free market's mechanisms were the main source of social inequalities, and that private ownership was the primary basis of exploitation. As Blagojević mentions, one's right to a apartment was universal, as a good belonging to the society as a whole, and was related to the ideal of a just distribution. Such a housing policy was specific in that the housing sector was exclusively treated as the consumption sector, however not as the production sector, which resulted in huge budgetary expenses and disparities between the needs and the economic possibilities. Vujović emphasizes the fact that the distribution of apartments in socialism was necessary for the social-ideological reproduction of the state's and the party's bureaucratic apparatuses, and that it represented a powerful factor of the apparatus's loyalty to the regime. [2] The state and its agents played a role of an investor, producer/constructor and distributor of apartments, whereas the public rental sector was supposed to be dominating over the housing fund. By abolishing the municipal funds for housing construction in the year 1965, and by changing the system of the financing of housing construction, the special-purpose contribution is left to labor organizations. Due to that, the status of the labor organization became measurable in percentage points of how well such organizations managed to accommodate, in the sense of housing accommodation, their employees. [3] Having in view the system of housing investments, i.e. the regime of salaries and the fact that the population of the SFRY was predominantly employed with state-owned enterprises, the

provision of a apartment owned by the state or socially-owned was the only one socially efficient solution in the cases of all households. As all the other socialist cities Belgrade was faced with a problem of the constant lack of housing units, so the fact that one's having a apartment of their own became a matter of one's prestigious position and social delayering was a paradox of the housing policy of self-management socialism.

## **2.2. The ideology of the “minimizing of the maximum” standard**

In the 1950's, housing construction was becoming a priority. The imperative of the housing policy in this time period was that as large a number of apartments as possible should be built and that the overall housing issue should be solved. The consequence of such social circumstances was an abrupt fall in the standard of housing as compared with the pre-war one. The housing consumption standards in the state's rental sector were treated as ideological, with an aim to control inequality. A maximum number of square meters per individual was being prescribed without a possibility of its exceeding (the minimizing of the maximum); however, it was not the case with the minimum, which is much more significant from the standpoint of the satisfaction of needs. Such a social role of the state in the field of housing is contrary to the approach of the “maximizing of the minimum” (whose increase is always sought) in market systems.[3] Year after year, continuously, the square meters of the housing space were being reduced per citizen in Belgrade. Between the years 1946 and 1949, the housing floor area per citizen declined from 11m<sup>2</sup> to 9.8m<sup>2</sup>. If compared with the pre-wartime 13.9m<sup>2</sup> of the housing floor area per citizen, that decline was a rather obvious one. The reduction was progressively continued till 6.5m<sup>2</sup> of the housing floor area per citizen in Belgrade in the year 1958. Having in view the estimation presented by French sociologists (the pathological threshold below which it is not possible to go without psycho-physical disturbances is between 8 and 10m<sup>2</sup> per individual) these data indicate how dramatic the housing situation in Belgrade was in this time period. [4]

A big problem in the field of the housing standard was too expensive construction. In order to solve the problem, various proposals were being made. Some of the most extreme attempts were certainly unsuccessful experiments in constructing apartments without the water supply system and other installations. In the context of the analysis of the mentioned proposal, a data which is deemed significant is that, in the year 1956, only around one-third of apartments in Belgrade were built with a bathroom. [5] In order to reduce the costs of construction, numerous people's committees were prohibiting the use of tiles and the installation of boilers in apartments. However, it is the fact that, irrespective of their being modestly constructed, the apartments built in that time period exceeded the economic power of the country. A significant increase in the standard in housing construction was present during the 1970's and the 1980's, when the majority of the apartments were being built for the army's needs. In that time period, differently from the modest postwar housing solutions of social apartments, a significant number of built housing facilities reached the high housing standard category from the point of view of their program quality, organization, function, content and equipment. [6]

### **2.3. The concept of the “elite” family living of the socialist citizen in collective housing conditions**

The socialist system of the production of social life and the social standard also conditioned a specific manner of the “production” of the universal housing space. Facilities mass construction in the regime of collective housing and the system of prefabricated construction, were being presented as the most economic and the most rational of all manners for reaching a higher living standard and for forming a new culture of collective multi-family housing.

The concept of the housing unit in the socialist system went through a transformation of the cultural and urban characters, evolving from modest postwar housing solutions related to the social housing units intended to the regime of social distribution to superior products of competition-induced solutions – which reach the high living standard category once their program quality, organization, function, content and pieces of equipment are taken into consideration, and as such represent a sort of a public good. [6] As a consequence of such a policy, a large fund of Belgrade’s housing architecture was projected, later constructed as well, in the time period of an intensive competition activity between 1966 and 1975, exactly as a result of the competition-induced solutions. Architectural-urban competitions were being carried out because of a need to reach an appropriate, expected, qualitative and quantitative level of the standardization of the housing space.

In the specified time period, the largest number of apartments were being built on the territory of New Belgrade, first of all for the needs of the Army. [7] After the positive experience related to the realization of the construction of the army’s apartments in Block 21, a conclusion was that, for future housing construction, it was needed to increase the apartment floor area (three-room and bigger apartments), so that the central zone of New Belgrade should become “elite” in its character. Once the realization of these facilities had been brought to an end (having lasted from the year 1972 to the year 1976), the housing construction in New Belgrade reached on average 40% of the overall housing construction on the territory of Belgrade, [8] having an influence on the standard of housing construction as well as on an increase in the average floor area and structure of housing units at the level of the city. This fact was, first of all, influenced by the fact that the Army was relatively independent in making choice of a location, which certainly represented a reflection of its social position and status.

## **3. THE APARTMENT AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SOCIALIST HOUSING CULTURE**

### **3.1. The apartment as a spatial-functional framework of family living**

The criteria of transformation and defining changes in a lifestyle, the economic and social statuses, can clearly be interpreted through the housing space parameters. The changes in the functional organization and structure of housing units, the minimized measures and floor areas expressed in square meters during the project-making of housing spaces, as well as rationality when making a concept, should have represented “new” housing needs of the civil family in the socialist society.



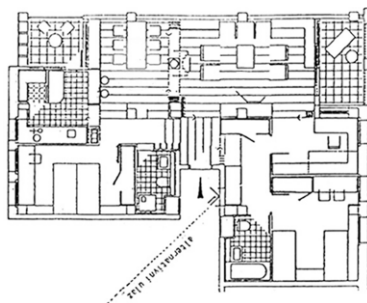
In compliance with the new social relations and ideology, the society was responsible for providing every person, either as an individual or a member of a family group, with an apartment where, according to their needs and wishes, they would be able to develop their individual lives (complete isolation), and, simultaneously, take part in the family living as well. However, the socialist manner of producing social living and the standard was based on socially-limited material resources. Wishing to reach a higher level of the living standard as well as to form a new culture of collective multi-family housing, such material and organizational circumstances conditioned numerous researches conducted in the field of the organization of the housing unit and the system of prefabricated construction. The process of programming housing units was being based on the projecting of the housing space which could satisfy a large number of assumed family situations. A variation of possible scenarios of using the same housing unit was being researched through the analyses of multi-functional housing spaces by superimposing compatible contents.

### **3.2. New concepts and principles of the "Belgrade School" of Housing Architecture**

"The Belgrade School of Housing" represents a synonym for the period of the intensive building of Yugoslavia between the 1970's and 1980's for the achieved quality of housing facilities, primarily from the aspect of functional organization. Apart from a large number of competitions and projects, this time period was also characterized by a large number of theoretical papers focusing on the theme of housing, with a special emphasis on the theory of needs and the spatial-functional organization of the apartment. The retrospective of the development of the idea of the "elite" family living of the socialist citizen in collective housing conditions could be gained insight through the aspects of the development of the spatial-functional concepts of the "Belgrade School of Housing".

- Organization conforms to the biological rhythm of the family (layouts structured into day and night zones)
- Dining as the addition to extended circulation (gravity center of the apartment)
- Two centers, division by generations
- Circular connection
- Technical block as an anchor point
- Loggia as an anchor point
- Flexibility
- Multi-family housing individualization
- Dimensional coordination of functional organization and structural system

The reconsideration of the share of the day and the night zones in the housing unit from the aspect of the development and the balance of relationships within the family challenged the classical organization of space with an obvious division into the day zone and the night zone. The organizing of the housing unit into two centers (the one in the living zone and the other one in the zone of its extension – the family table) arose from a need for polarization, grouping and spending time associating within an age group, between the elderly generation and the younger generations.



**Fig. 1.** Apartment in residential Settlement Cerak Vinogradi, Belgrade, the nineteen-eighties, architects: Prof. Darko Marušić, Melanija Marušić, Nedeljko Borovnica

In the analyzed time period, the circular connection, representing one of the main motives in the apartment organization, was also an important theme because it was considered that it enabled the possibility of making choice of the direction, by which the apartment acquired a completely new quality and a higher usage value. This concept also contributed to the overlapping and permeation of the day and the night zones of the apartment and to a higher degree of the connectivity of different activities within the apartment. The apartment zones were no longer strictly polarized but the connection between them became more elastic and more direct.



**Fig. 2.** Apartment in residential settlement Blok 22, Novi Beograd, 1968. Architects: Božidar Janković, Branislav Karadžić, Aleksandar Stjepanović.

When the structure of the apartment is concerned, the question of the gathering of the family members and the transformation of the day zone in the apartment is extremely sociologically significant. Due to restricted economic possibilities, the economical quality was frequently reached by the reduction in the number of “typical” rooms, by anticipating a bed for one member of the family in the living-room. This issue was always topical as a subject matter of numerous laws, debates and discussions since it was considered to have a negative impact on social conditions and that is unacceptable as a standard since it does not enable gathering without interrupting. However, irrespective of the criticism and attempts to have that practice of project-making changed, all manuals for making projects for and constructing

apartments, except for those manuals issued by the Ministry of Construction Works of the FPRY from the year 1947, anticipate the provision of a bed for one member of the family in the living-room, which also represented a room in the apartment which all family members shared with each other as well.

As a result of numerous researches, and with an aim to find a solution to the mentioned problem, a proposal for an extended circulation as the central place for the gathering of the family members was presented in 1957. Using one part of the communication for the placing of the dining table, an economical space for the family members to gather was planned in the apartment. The family table is part of the tradition; however, in the new social conditions, it acquired a new role – the role of a multipurpose point – a regulator of the apartment's flexibility and its increased usage value. A more intimate connection between the kitchen and the extended circulation offered new possibilities to the family's shared living; an additional part in the form of a space for certain activities carried out inside the household (such as sewing, ironing, hobbies...), or the extended part of the communication for children to play and other things. All these were new points for living in the apartment, and, parallel with the orientation towards the two centers, they had a big influence on the formation of the socialist culture of multi-family collective living through the circular communication and the application of the principle of the growing apartment or the reducing apartment.

The emancipation and mass employment of women as well as the mechanization of jobs in the household significantly contributed to the shortening of the time needed for carrying out activities inside the home, which had as a consequence the reduction in the engagement of the woman within the household. Thus there was a separation of activities performed by all the members of the family, irrespective of their sex and age. The biggest transformations of the apartment were made within the space bearing the apartment's technical and hygienic functions.

The following ones are characteristic spatial-functional modifications:

- Shifting from the housing to the working kitchen;
- Dining as the addition to extended kitchen and the emergence of an extended circulation; and
- Locating the space for managing the household in the center of the housing unit.



**Fig. 3.** Award-winning competition project, Block 61 and 62, New Belgrade, apartment variations, 1971. Architects D. and M. Marušić, M. Miodragović

As Jovanović-Nenadović points out, the locating of the technical block in the central part of the apartment so that it represents a sort of the apartment's constitutive motive – a command bridge – the central point of controlling the management of the household became recognized as a characteristic approach to the organization of the apartment. [9]

### 3.3. Equipment of the apartment

The new housing spaces were supposed to represent a new culture and style of living of the socialist citizen, which certainly was contradictory to the until-then style of living of occupants who had come from various parts of the country and from environments of a different urbanity. The majority of the citizens had previously been living in single-family homes with a garden or in the so-called “salon apartments” with such elements as a dining-room, a boudoir, a library, a gallery, a salon and so forth between the wars. In the conditions of new apartments of minimized measures and floor spaces expressed in square meters which represented new housing needs of the civil family, there was no room for old habits and pieces of furniture. The style of life of the socialist citizen had to be redefined. With an aim to construct and organize apartments in as rational a manner as possible, together with projects made for apartments, architects frequently made proposals for the elements of the apartment's equipment as well. This equipment was most frequently project-made as modular in order to be economical and in accordance with the quantity of housing construction. Its goal was not to represent class-social differences and prestige, but to represent equality, rationality and economical quality in compliance with the dominant ideology and the new expected style of life of the working family.



**Fig. 4.** Interior of New Belgrade typical apartment

Contemporary technological solutions had a big impact in the transformation of the existing and the construction of a new housing culture. Here we can highlight the influence of the elevator, which, together with contemporary construction techniques, enabled the construction of tall buildings, which had been beyond any possibility of realization in the conditions in Belgrade between the wars. The construction of tall buildings was certainly supposed to represent the progress, contemporariness and power of the then state's ideology. However, such a “new” culture of housing was not always approved of by the users.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

The change of the state system and the dominant social goals as well as the redirection of the state's production from agricultural to industrial after the Second World War conditioned radical transformations of urban living. Within such an ideological framework, the policy of socialism was to create a new man – the socialist citizen. The main goal was to apply a new social structure to all the aspects of urban life, so that the absence of symbolics in planning and project-making was strongly being criticized. In compliance with the dominant ideology that the apartment should not be one of the characteristics of class differentiation any longer and a new expected style of life of the working family, the socialist apartment was supposed to represent equality, rationality and economical quality. However, the socialistic manner of the production of the social living and standard was being based on socially-limited material resources, which, in the stage one of the construction of apartments in socialism in the time period of the 1950's and the 1960's, resulted in low standards and restricted spatial-functional solutions and apartments' equipment. Through an intensive competition practice in the next time period, in the 1970's and the 1980's, there was a rise in standards, which was primarily reflected in the development of the concept of the "elite" family living of the socialist citizen in the conditions of collective housing through the principles of the "Belgrade School of Housing".

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