

SOCIAL PLANNING: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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Abstract: This article discusses the history of the idea of social planning, and of the pioneering Masters Programme in Social Planning established at the University of Wales Swansea in 1973. Swansea's initiative in social planning led to the creation of the University's Centre for Development Studies (CDS), and it broadened development studies as an academic and policy field. Social planning is a controversial term because it has sometimes been associated with social engineering and totalitarianism. Nevertheless, it has a very important intellectual and policy agenda, and if the word 'planning' proves a liability it can be replaced by 'policy' or 'strategy'. The major questions reviewed at CDS-Swansea in the 1970s are still pertinent, and new dimensions have been added through growing concerns for nation-building, sustainability, democracy, gender equity and human rights. Copyright © 2003 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since the Age of Enlightenment, the concept of planning has been applied to much more than designing and constructing buildings and infrastructure, or preparing military campaigns. In its broadest sense, planning is the formulation and implementation of economic, social, environmental, spatial and sectoral development strategies. A sustained and ongoing development process requires various types of planning, including a capacity to innovate so as to adapt to changing political, environmental and technological circumstances. Planning can take place in corporations, non-profit organizations and communities, as well as in governments.

Old models of authoritarian government planners in autarkic state systems have no relevance outside a few pariah nations, and all modern planning takes place in a competitive, interdependent and constantly changing world system. To some conservative and free market advocates, however, the term 'planning' symbolizes bureaucracy and statism, and for many 'planning' is used only to refer to land use and built environment decisions. For those who abhor the term planning, the words 'policy' for government, and

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'strategy' for corporations, non-profit organizations and the military, are used to indicate the essence of planning; forethought, design and professionalism in decision-making and implementation. A middle road is to use the words 'policy and planning' together, in which case policy refers to broad decisions about what to do and how to respond to the unexpected, while planning focuses on the details of design, phasing, budgeting and implementation.

Many adjectives can precede the word planning so as to give it a more specific focus and meaning. Some relate to scale and type of place, for example local, municipal, regional, national, river basin, rural, suburban, urban and metropolitan. Others relate to type of activity, for example layout, schedule, project, programme, curriculum and construction. Still others relate to fields of endeavor, for example landscape, educational, agricultural, physical, economic, social, health and infrastructure.

'Social' is one of the widest and most ambiguous of the adjectives that can precede and define planning. The word social can imply 'in the public interest, and of general concern', or it can imply 'peoples' interaction and participation', or it can imply a distinctive sphere of interest or activity, different to the 'economic' or 'environmental' or 'technological'. It is interesting to reflect, for example, on what the word social adds when used as an adjective with such nouns as activity, concern, issues, interest, development, environment, pattern, interaction, and policy.

Like the adjective social, the noun planning has great breadth and numerous ambiguities. Combining the two as 'social planning' is a bold and complex idea, and the University of Wales Swansea was a pioneer in establishing a one-year Masters in Social Planning programme in 1973. The Masters in Social Planning took between 10 and 25 students a year till the mid-1980s, when enrollments fell sharply. In 1987 the Masters in Social Planning was merged with a parallel programme in Social Sector Planning and Management to form a new Masters in Social Development Planning and Management, which has run continuously ever since.¹

This article reviews the scope and alternative definitions of social planning, their application in the Swansea Masters in Social Planning programme, and their relation to the major debates in development studies. For Swansea the establishment of the Masters in Social Planning was the beginning of a much broader transition from social policy to development studies. Several other specialized development units in British universities, such as local government studies at Birmingham, public administration at Manchester, rural development at Reading, and urban planning at University College London, made similar transitions, broadening their scope and joining the expanding interdisciplinary field of development studies. In each case, the institutional transition served not only to expand the number of institutions and scholars identified with development studies, but also to expand the field by raising new issues. Swansea staff played a major role in establishing the Development Studies Association in the late 1970s,² and discussion of Swansea's pioneering role in social planning illustrates key issues in development studies. An infusion of ideas from development studies widened Swansea's intellectual horizons, and in turn, the energy and scholarship of Swansea staff helped expand development studies.

¹All these degrees were MSc.Econ., an ironic University of Wales placement of the social within 'economic science'.

²I was the first Secretary of DSA, serving under Presidents Keith Griffin and Amartya Sen from the foundation meeting in London in 1997 till after the third annual conference, held in Swansea on September 15–17, 1980.

2 DIFFERENT VISIONS OF SOCIAL PLANNING

In the development of the Masters in Social Planning and in the pertinent literature (e.g. Conyers, 1982; Scheff, 1976) five different and sometimes overlapping approaches to social planning became evident, each reflecting a different interpretation of the word social and different priorities for planning. The differences between these approaches illustrate the ways in which development studies ideas penetrated Swansea's academic discourse, and also the ways in which the addition of social perspectives helped widen and refocus development studies. Listing them in sequence from the most to the least ambitious and comprehensive, I call these approaches societal transformation; redistribution; participation; social sectors; and, social services.

2.1 Societal Transformation

In this approach, social planning is the remodeling and transformation of society as a whole. This requires envisioning a better society, and developing and implementing a strategy to gradually transform the current society to that better society of the future. The strategy is likely to be holistic, embracing a whole country, its economic and social sectors, its constitution and government organization, and public participation in the political process. Usually there is a vision of a strong, focused government with a single-minded leadership which leads the nation to what it sees as a better future, over-ruling what it sees as vested interests and undesirable consumption in favour of longer-term education, saving and investment. Contrasting examples of such regimes include Singapore since its national independence in 1965, the Soviet Union between the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the fall of Krushchev in 1964, Nyerere's Tanzania between 1961 and 1985, and Velasco's Peru between 1968 and 1975.

Advocates of planning for societal transformation often hearken back to the United States in the New Deal Era, or Britain in the 1940s, and argue that extreme situations of economic collapse, poverty and external military threat require a strong and visionary government, and that it is perfectly possible for government to act in determined fashion to create a better future while maintaining the essential checks and balances which ensure the long-term continuation of democracy. Key inspirations to societal transformation approaches are Lester Ward (1906), Cecil North (1932), Lewis Lorwin (1945), Alva and Gunnar Myrdal (Carlson, 1990), and J. K. Galbraith (1967). The most positive examples of what they sought are probably the western European 'welfare states' of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. A few authors, for example Canada's League for Social Reconstruction (1935) and Britain's Alan Walker (1984) have emphasized the relationship between the words 'social' and 'socialist', presenting social planning as socialist planning and developing plans which can also serve as party manifestos.

Some critics of the societal transformation approach, most notably James Scott (1998) and Benjamin Young (1960), believe that it is utopian and dangerous because governments committed to long-term transformations may become increasingly authoritarian as they suppress political dissent, resistance to hard work and sacrifice, and demands for greater consumption. These critics may also argue, following Friedrich Hayek (1944, 1989), that governments can never have enough information to formulate broad-scale, long-term strategies, and that market forces must prevail. Opponents of societal transformation usually label it as 'social engineering', implying inhuman treatment of people by an excessively controlling state.

2.2 Redistribution

In this approach, social planners seek to reduce socio-economic inequalities as a means of reducing and even eliminating poverty, of stimulating economic growth, and of eliminating the threat of bloody revolution against the existing order (e.g. Beveridge, 1942; Cornia *et al.*, 1987–88; Lipton, 1977). The underlying philosophy is reformist and centrist or centre-left on the political spectrum. It is based on a strong belief that if market forces prevail socio-economic inequalities will increase until the peasantry or proletariat rise up to overthrow the bourgeoisie. It is also cynical about revolution, arguing that most successful revolutions inaugurate repressive or corrupt regimes, and that the very threat of revolution encourages existing regimes to suspend democracy and repress their own citizens. The advocates of redistributive social planning are typically Social Democrats, or in British terms Fabian Socialists, advocating social insurance and a welfare state, or left leaning Christian Democrats advocating a tripartite system of collective bargaining. Redistributive social planners may also advocate economic pluralism, protecting and promoting small businesses, cooperatives and social property as alternatives to big business and state enterprises.

The redistribution approach embraces most of the social agenda of the societal transformation approach, and both place considerable emphasis on the need to develop social indicators and collect abundant data to monitor progress. Overall, however, the redistribution approach is more focused and less ambitious than societal transformation. It dates back to classics like Ryan's (1906) *A Living Wage*, but it didn't reach its peak in international development circles till the 1970s, when the ILO (1972) Kenya Report and *Redistribution with Growth* (Chenery *et al.*, 1974) became mainstream texts in development studies. Most of the specialists in this approach have backgrounds in economics.

2.3 Participation

This approach to social planning is based on the assumption that the general public has traditionally been excluded from government decision-making, and that this exclusion is undemocratic and socially dysfunctional. Excluding the public from the planning process supports a hierarchical, top-down, techno-bureaucratic vision of government, and it generally seems appropriate to social elites, authoritarian rulers, military leaders, technocratic planners and entrenched professional interests. Nevertheless, exclusion may cause alienation and apathy, it may lead to resentment, sabotage, vandalism and revolution, and it may hamper the education, invention, artistic and entrepreneurial spirits that can accelerate economic growth. Thus, social planning becomes planning *for* people and planning *by* people, and social planners become the experts in monitoring public opinion, encouraging public awareness and participation in government decision-making, and supporting grass-roots initiatives through community planning workshops, petitions, counter-proposals, and the support and proliferation of a wide range of local development organizations, advocacy and lobbying organizations, and community-based social service providers. The field attracts many people with strong religious and humanistic beliefs, as well as an eclectic mix of sociologists, anthropologists, anarchists, and specialists in communication, politics and public relations (e.g. Brohman, 1996; Greed, 1999; Moser, 1993). Critiques of the rhetoric and official abuse of participation include Cooke and Kothari (2001) and Shirley (1979).

2.4 Social Sectors

In this approach, social planning is the planning of the social sectors of the economy (e.g. Correa, 1975; Hyman, 1976; Jolly, 1969; MacPherson, 1982; Titmuss, 1958). It is based on a simplistic model of the economy, whereby certain sectors—typically agriculture, mining, fisheries, forestry, manufacturing, construction, transportation, commerce, finance, insurance and real estate—are deemed ‘productive’ or ‘economic’. Most of the remainder—typically education, health, housing, criminal justice, and social services—are deemed ‘social’ because they may be provided as public services, and their products are not necessarily sold on the open market. Finally, a few sectors—notably defence and international relations—do not fit the ‘economic’ or ‘social’ model, and are sustained because of their importance to national security. The social sectors have distinctive planning models and methods, based heavily on the demographics of the populations which they serve and on visions of ‘manpower planning’, whereby government seeks to match future population characteristics with the labour market requirements of a larger and more prosperous economy. In the social sectoral approach, social planning is easily split into separate sectoral processes, conducted in each sectoral agency—Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health etc. Because NGOs often play an important role in the social sectors, planning may be based in non-profits as well as in government.

2.5 Social Services

This approach is a narrower version of the social sectors approach, assuming that health planning, education planning, manpower planning and criminal justice planning are distinct and separate fields in their own right, and that housing, health, education and even correctional services may be provided by for-profit corporations. The social services approach to social planning therefore focuses on specific disadvantaged groups of the population who cannot afford to pay for the services that they need, and who are to some extent provided for and protected by the state and charitable organizations (e.g. Burch, 1996; Falk and Lee, 1978; Mayer, 1982; Moseley, 1979; Pusic, 1965). Such groups may include the poor, crime victims, substance abusers, the handicapped, the elderly, recent immigrants and refugees and persons released from correctional institutions. In all of these cases, government, often assisted by the non-profit sector, may take responsibility for providing services, and the planning and management of those services may be viewed as ‘social planning’. The principal professional influence on this style of social planning comes from the social work and social welfare profession, which tends to split between two very different viewpoints—a holistic approach which emphasizes community development and community care, and a clinical approach which emphasizes casework and institutional care.

3 THE SWANSEA PROGRAMME: FIVE APPROACHES, MANY BLENDS

3.1 The Academic Staff

When the Masters in Social Planning degree programme was established in Swansea in 1973, and through to the foundation of the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) in 1976,

each of these five approaches was already visible and associated with some of the academic staff. Swansea already had established strengths in social sectors and social services, and through editorship of the *Community Development Journal* and extensive staff experience of rural community development in Commonwealth countries, it had a significant record in participation. The push during the 1970s was to widen coverage to embrace redistribution and societal transformation. The development efforts around the world in the 1950s and 1960s were viewed as excessively focused on economic growth and physical infrastructure, with insufficient concern for income distribution, poverty, health, education, job training, community development, and the creation of a social safety net. Swansea's Masters in Social Planning sought to balance the economic and social objectives of development by raising the profile and prestige of the social. The fundamental objective of the programme was to develop a cadre of social planners, able to dialogue on an equal basis with economic planners and physical planners, and keen to make both development planning and development studies truly interdisciplinary.

Nancy Baster was the founding Masters in Social Planning Director and taught on the programme for two years before she retired. She relied heavily on her previous work at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in Geneva, and on links with other European-based UN agencies, notably ILO, WHO and UNESCO. Her emphasis was on the redistribution approach to social planning, but she also covered the social sectors approach. She emphasized 'social indicators' and a 'unified approach to development', two UNRISD projects which assumed that prior development thinking and efforts had been excessively dominated by economists and obsessed with economic growth, creating the paradoxical association of economic growth, rising inequality and mass poverty. The indicators were used to measure development by Quality of Life rather than GNP. The 'unified approach' (UNRISD, 1980) was promoted in the pioneering UN correspondence course in social planning which she helped organize (UN, 1972). It advocated interdisciplinary planning teams which would give equal attention to social and economic issues.

Maurice Broady, the Head of the new Department of Social Administration, was a vigorous advocate of the participation approach, and his book *Planning for People* (Broady, 1968) was widely read. He brought a sociological perspective to the analysis of British new towns, public housing and land-use planning. In his office hung a portrait of Karl Mannheim, renowned pioneer in the sociology of knowledge and the theory of democratic social planning (e.g. Mannheim 1940). He saw the establishment of the Masters in Social Planning as a way to give Social Administration greater academic prestige, but this prospect soon faded after the separation of the Overseas Courses to form the new CDS.

Andrew Lochhead, Director of Overseas Courses till he retired in 1976, had negotiated support from the UK Overseas Development Administration (ODA) to establish the Masters in Social Planning, targeting middle-level national government officials from developing countries. Early in his career he had been a student of Patrick Geddes, perhaps the greatest pioneering advocate of participatory planning in the former British Empire, and he knew many of the Labour politicians who had helped build the British Welfare State. He was a vigorous advocate of community development in developing countries, arguing that social casework was too expensive to be sustainable and that communitarian traditions could be revived to guard against the worst features of individualism and greed. He mixed the social services and participation models of social planning and occasionally railed against technocratic visions of societal transformation and social sectors planning.³

³His autobiography (Lochhead 1999: pp. 95–99) provides fascinating insights.

Both Maurice Broady and Andrew Lochhead claimed to have founded the Masters in Social Planning, but it was Nancy Baster who played the central role in organizing and teaching the initial curriculum. Thus, students got a liberal helping of the UN Correspondence Course and UNRISD research.⁴ Regrettably, however, they heard little of Mannheim or Geddes.

The faculty of the old Overseas Courses came from a community development tradition mixing social services, social sectors and participation approaches. Those perspectives were strengthened by new faculty arrivals who brought broader interdisciplinary social science perspectives, heavily infused with political economy.⁵ They concentrated on societal transformation and redistribution approaches and applied Marxist, Neo-Marxist and Social Democratic perspectives to development issues. The Soviet, Cuban, Tanzanian and Peruvian models of national development were frequently discussed, and there was a major infusion of ideas from IDS-Sussex and the ILO's World Employment Programme.

3.2 The Students

In the early years of the Masters in Social Planning, the students came mainly from Commonwealth countries of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. Gradually, however, and for four major reasons, the range of countries diversified. First, the ODA/ODM and British Council were increasing the availability of scholarships to non-Commonwealth countries. Second, in the mid-1970s, the World University Service sponsored a substantial number of Chilean political refugees. Third, in the late 1970s temporarily-prosperous oil exporting nations such as Iraq, Algeria and Venezuela sponsored their own scholars. Fourth, a widening group of NGOs began to send scholars to the programme, including both European and developing country staff.

The student mix initially emphasized civil servants with backgrounds in social work, and civil servants working in social sectoral ministries, departments and offices. Through time, however, more students with economics and social science backgrounds were recruited, and more students came from national planning departments, regional administrations and aid organizations. Nevertheless, each year there was something of a divide between students who thought they had come to study how to plan and manage social sectors and social services, and students who were more interested in the full range of national policy issues, both economic and social.

Within the CDS learning environment, students were required to go way beyond their previous education to encompass new thinking in social planning, with many ideas still pertinent over a quarter of a century later. Students were not so much receiving 'training' as being encouraged to think broadly about social issues and national development. It is hardly surprising that many of the best students left the civil service soon after returning to their countries of origin. Some went to work for consultancy firms, or founded their own firms. Some entered international organizations. Some became university lecturers. Some entered PhD programmes, using the PhD as a stepping-stone to a new career in higher education or international development.

⁴See Baster (1970, 1972), Baster and Scott (1969), Drewnowski (1974), McGranahan (1973).

⁵See Bromley (1985), Bromley and Gerry (1979), Elliott (1975), Gore (1984), Kitching (1980, 1982), Oakley and Marsden (1984).

The rapid growth and increasing diversity of interests in CDS in the late 1970s led to the creation of two new Masters programmes in 1978: one in Social Sector Planning and Management (MSSPM) and the other in Regional Development Planning (MRDP). MSSPM reflected Swansea's traditional social development interests, and it absorbed much of the social services, social sectors and participation activity of the Masters in Social Planning. The MRDP was based on a growing body of CDS research on the spatial dimensions of societal transformation and redistribution, including policies relating to urbanization, regional inequalities and natural resource management.⁶ All three Masters programmes had healthy enrollments for a few years, but by the mid-1980s student numbers were falling and MSSPM and MRDP had absorbed several of the policy areas that the Masters in Social Planning had embraced in the mid-1970s.

4 SWANSEA'S SOCIAL PLANNING NETWORK

Swansea was the only institution that established a Masters programme exclusively in Social Planning. The closest parallel was the London School of Economics (LSE), which established a Diploma in Social Policy and Planning in 1973, and a Masters in Social Policy and Planning (MSPP) in 1974. LSE built a strong research record in these fields,⁷ and its MSPP continues to be popular with students. Overall, LSE has been more oriented to the participation, social sectors and social services approaches, while Swansea had at least a decade of more ambitious social planning activity, focusing on societal transformation and redistribution. Both Swansea's Masters in Social Planning and LSE's Masters in Social Policy and Planning began with encouragement from Russell Prosser, the Social Development Advisor at ODA in the early 1970s.

Looking beyond LSE, Swansea had three main European social planning contacts in the 1970s: UNRISD; the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, which worked closely with UNRISD and did a lot of training, research and publishing on social policy; and IDS, which had organized a major conference on social planning in 1969 (Apthorpe, 1970) and which was heavily involved in ILO and World Bank research on employment, income distribution and poverty.

Outside Europe, Swansea's main social planning link was with the UN's Latin American Institute of Economic and Social Planning, ILPES, founded in 1962 and headquartered in Santiago, Chile. In the mid-1970s ILPES developed an interest in social planning as a separate field from economic planning. Over the next few years, ILPES partnered with UNICEF to mount training courses in social planning, and the two international organizations soon contacted Swansea for assistance. As a result, I taught two short courses in Santiago and two in Brasilia, and I contributed to a reader on social planning (Franco, 1981) and co-edited a reader with Eduardo Bustelo of UNICEF-Brazil (Bromley and Bustelo, 1982).⁸

⁶e.g. Bromley (1977), Gore (1984), Saha and Barrow (1981).

⁷See, e.g. Hardiman and Midgley (1982), Macpherson and Midgley (1987), Midgley (1986, 1995), Midgley and Piachaud (1984).

⁸It is unfortunate that Swansea never forged links with the main North American centre of social planning teaching and scholarship, the Heller School at Brandeis University. Stronger US links could have been very useful in helping CDS-Swansea diversify its funding base and resist the political pressures of the 1980s.

5 THE ECLIPSE OF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING UNDER THATCHER

When Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979, it soon became evident that the centrist Keynesian consensus in British politics which had prevailed since the early 1950s was irrevocably broken. For the first time a reader and admirer of Hayek was in power, and dramatic changes followed. Aided and advised by Sir Keith Joseph, Thatcher severely questioned regional and national planning ideas, international aid and development, and the presence of leftist ideologies in British Universities. Sociology was viewed as a particularly dubious academic discipline, national planning was branded as quasi-Soviet in mentality, and universities were required to focus more intensely on generating revenue and published research. The Thatcher Government also dramatically raised tuition fees for overseas students. As Britain shifted, so did most of the world, with the US Presidencies of Ronald Reagan (1981–1989) and George H. W. Bush (1989–1993), the Gulf War (1991), and the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991). Mrs Thatcher stepped down as Prime Minister in 1990, to be succeeded by John Major, but her 'revolution' continued well into the 1990s.

During the Thatcher Era CDS underwent great changes. Many of the 1970s faculty left, and Swansea and CDS readjusted their programmes, funding and objectives to ensure institutional survival in a vulnerable period. The commitment to social planning and national planning was dropped in 1987 because the Thatcher Government created an ideological climate in which planning for societal transformation or redistribution seemed subversive, rather than reformist. The flow of students for such programmes was endangered, the continuation of the programmes diverted resources from new initiatives that seemed more promising, and most of the other development studies centres in Britain were going through similar periods of reinvention and retrenchment.

6 ALL THE BIG QUESTIONS ARE STILL UNANSWERED, AND MORE HAVE APPEARED

The three decades since the establishment of Swansea's pioneering Masters in Social Planning programme have been accompanied by substantial, but tremendously uneven, global economic development. The global economic system has become increasingly integrated, capital has become increasingly mobile and footloose, and intra-national and international inequalities have increased. Though the Cold War is over, the issues of the 1970s are as fresh and important as ever. Can national governments of relatively poor and indebted countries ever escape the burden of debt? Is compliance with the policies recommended by advanced capitalist nations and the international banking system essential to avoid economic collapse and political destabilization? Do nation states have the capacity to make and implement policies to reduce socio-economic inequality and guarantee some form of social safety net, or is this idea simply anti-capitalist utopianism? Can redistribution promote growth, or is it simply an impediment to global competitiveness? Is there any real evidence that more equitable societies are more harmonious or have higher economic growth rates, or that social justice is a meaningful objective for social policy?

The three worlds model of the global system (Hettne, 1990) no longer makes much sense, and the world system is dramatically different with the United States as sole

military superpower since the end of the Cold War. Additional major changes in the world system since the 1970s include the strengthening and expansion of the European Community, the economic and social demise of Japan, the economic and military rise of China, the global AIDS epidemic, and increasing pessimism about the future of the Middle East and Africa. Nevertheless, the old 1970s concept and aspiration of a New International Economic Order (Behrman, 1974) is still a beacon of hope. The ideals of democracy and human rights are still remembered and discussed in many parts of the world. In most parts of the world, however, they are currently frustrated by authoritarian rule, the power of elites, transnational corporations and the mass media, and by ethnic, gender and religious prejudices which deny the rights of large groups of people.

Despite the sorry realities of the past and present, it is reasonable to hope for world peace and prosperity in the future. To achieve these objectives, it is necessary to create a viable system which facilitates sustainable economic growth and social harmony. This will almost certainly depend on strengthening the international community of nation states, and on nation-building in areas of the world which are currently ruled by dictatorial regimes, or torn apart by banditry, organized crime, civil war, or genocide.

New social planning questions have emerged as life expectancies rise and birth rates fall in rich nations, as pressure for international migration grows, as new information and communications technologies transform the global system, and as the pace of global economic and technological change continues to accelerate. Though most utopian visions of societal transformation have faded into history, fundamental issues of social, economic, political and environmental justice and sustainability are as pertinent as ever. Social planning is not dead! Its agenda is more important than ever, and it is increasingly central to development studies. It may be carried on under a different name, such as 'social policy', 'restoring democratic institutions', 'sustainable development', or 'nation-building', but it cannot be buried.

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