Multiculturalism in the city: managing diversity

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses theories of multiculturalism from the perspective of urban sociology. It considers ways in which the phenomenon is defined, problems identified with it and proposed management strategies.

It does so by reviewing the challenges multiculturalism poses for the model of liberal citizenship.

This is followed by an analysis of models of citizen participation that aim to reflect this diversity. Particular attention is devoted to models of aggregate and deliberative democracy originating from the work of Iris Young. While multiculturalism encompasses a variety of phenomena, the focus here is on that classic multiculturalist paradigm, immigration.

The paper concludes with theoretical reflections and the presentation of four types of multicultural city, four approaches to managing the ethnic and cultural diversity of the European city: *exclusion city*, *assimilation city*, *difference city* and *multicultural city*.

Equality means that everybody has the right to be different from everybody else (Umberto Eco, El País, June 12th 2002)

Introduction

The phenomenon of multiculturalism questions two main concepts that have given form to western society over the past two decades: the nation-state and citizenship. The nation-state because multiculturalism recognises the existence of groups with political demands different from those of the majority, thus denying the state's homogeneity. Citizenship because multiculturalism subverts the principle of individual equality when making claims based on group identities.

These phenomena have a special relevance at urban level. Modern cities are places where complex multicultural realities emerge and mix within a great swathe of political, social and religious traditions, and most Europeans live in urban centres characterised by a high degree of cultural diversity, generating conflicts related to multiculturalism. Despite the different contexts, multiculturalism is an issue both in the cities of northern Europe - the traditional goal of immigrants - and in southern counterparts like Barcelona and Madrid.

The nation is what traditionally defines citizenship, but there are other dimensions that facilitate a better understanding of this concept and adapt to changes in its meaning. The local level is one such dimension: locally the tension between the community and formal aspects of citizenship becomes evident, as do the contradictions between universal citizenship and one based on difference. Analysis of the local level clearly exposes policy responses to conflicts of this nature.

This paper analyses theories of multiculturalism from the perspective of urban sociology. It considers ways in which the phenomenon is defined, problems identified with it and proposed management strategies.
It does so by reviewing the challenges multiculturalism poses for the model of liberal citizenship.
This is followed by an analysis of models of citizen participation that aim to reflect this diversity. Particular attention is devoted to models of aggregate and deliberative democracy originating from the work of Iris Young. While multiculturalism encompasses a variety of phenomena, the focus here is on that classic multiculturalist paradigm, immigration. The concentration of immigrants in urban areas gives a special relevance to the urban dimension of multiculturalism with which this paper deals.

This analysis is intended to contribute to a better understanding between the fields of multicultural and urban studies and to help establish a theoretical framework for further research.

1. Multiculturalism: Definitions

The concept of multiculturalism is used to refer to an extensive range of social groups that, for various reasons, have been excluded from or marginalised by mainstream society. Examples include groups defined by nation, culture, and sexual orientation. This diversity necessitates clearer definition in order to facilitate the analysis that is the purpose of this paper. Will Kymlicka writes that multiculturalism constitutes "the diverse ways mimorities are incorporated in political communities" (Kymlicka, 1996). Going beyond this definition, multiculturalism is a political philosophy that recognises cultural and ethnic diversity in a society and supports their expression and recognition as constituent elements of the social order. It assumes the right of groups to exercise their religious and civil practices, as well as equality of rights for individuals and communities.

Kymlicka creates order in this diversity by distinguishing between national minorities, ethnic groups and new social movements. Other authors also highlight the need to distinguish between national and ethnic identities (Miller, 1994). The principal difference is that while the national minorities lay claim to a political programme, ethnic groups rarely do so. However, in reality no clear distinction can be made on the basis of political claims and, as Hobsbawm (1995) points out, the concept of ethnicity can also be arbitrary. This paper limits its analysis to polyethnic diversity deriving from the presence in western societies of immigrants originating in developing countries, even if the roots of the conflict that both phenomena pose to liberalism are the same. Specifically, it examines how the presence of different cultural identities affects coexistence and organisation in the local public arena.

As noted, this presence poses specific problems which can acquire particular relevance at local level. However, before concentrating on conflict in urban society it is necessary to review two concepts that have traditionally framed western citizenship on a more general level. The aim of this is to test the continued relevance of these concepts or, as is suggested here, whether others are more appropriate in a discussion of multiculturalism.

The concepts referred to - the nation-state and the liberal model of citizenship - have configured the political organisation of western society in the last two decades. However, they now require redefinition in the light of new phenomena such as the process of European integration and the creation of supranational political entities. Multiculturalism is another such phenomenon, founded as it is in the acknowledgement of the claims of various cultural identities on the basis of national, ethnic or religious criteria. The nation-state and the liberal model of citizenship - bedded in the twin notions of universal citizenship and equality - do not allow the recognition of such difference, maintaining it in the private sphere. Writers such as Miller (1994:154) show that liberalism, while it allows individuals to claim links to a particular culture (the predominant home of difference), is indifferent to the preservation and development of that culture. Kymlicka acknowledges that practically all liberal democracies are multinational and polyethnic; the question is, however, how this diversity can be accommodated in a stable fashion. Again, Miller notes that for liberalism the solution is assimilation to the culture of mainstream culture or to that represented by the nation-state.

The city can be seen as a space in which the process of accommodation takes place, from the perspective of both communal coexistence and public administration. For instance, by giving immigrants the vote in municipal elections city the city can allow its inhabitants to participate in public life and the political sphere without requiring them to change their national or cultural identity. The local is therefore a zone in which political participation in the public sphere can be achieved in the context of diversity (Baumann, 2001). It is true that cities are also seen as spaces of segregation, both spatially (ghettos) and socially. However, this paper stresses that these problems as they manifest themselves locally can also best be solved at city level.

1.1 The Nation-State and Liberal Citizenship

Various authors are in agreement that the origin of the concept of citizenship as it is understood today is to be found in the model of political organisation of the liberal tradition[i], and more specifically in the nation-state. Promoting a unique identity as a basis for political stability, the inclination of modern states to homogenise their citizens (Hobsbawm, 1995) has resulted in a tendency towards the assimilation of minority cultures to majority cultures. In this order of things, minority and ethnic group claims make evident the need for a new approach. This does not necessarily entail deserting the liberal paradigm: authors such as Taylor and Kymlicka have shown that it is possible to develop a recognition of diversity from a liberal approach.

The basis of liberalism is the freedom and equality of all citizens without reference to group identities. It would seem that this definition does not leave space for the recognition of differentiated rights based on group identities. In fact, the model of liberal citizenship is based on the belief that interests related to cultural membership are already protected as part and parcel of normal citizen's rights, and that any complementary measure is therefore illegitimate (Kymlicka, 1996:151). Individual rights are sufficient to accommodate cultural difference because the freedom of association according to belief is recognised. In the liberal state the civic norms of the political community are seen to be separate from cultural identity. However, as Peter Kraus points out[ii], this is a situation not often found in the real world since political interaction takes place in an specific cultural context: that of the dominant culture. Kymlicka (1996) shares this view, noting that, by regulating festivities, symbols and languages, the state can end up favouring one culture to the detriment of others.

The alternative to this apparent homogeneity is to consider differentiated citizenship based on group specificities. Kymlicka refers to three typologies of group-differentiated rights - self-government rights, polyethnic rights and representation rights - that can play a role in protecting minorities from the political and economic power of the society in which they live.
This paper will focus on polyethnic and representation rights, these having the most direct bearing on the field of immigration.

Polyethnic rights are aimed at helping ethnic groups and minorities express their particularity without preventing their integration into the political and economic institutions of the dominant society, for integration into wider society is indeed the goal. Representation rights have a more political nature as their goal is to incorporate social diversity into the political process.

The question arising here is if the city can be a starting point for the development of this kind of rights. While local political entities obviously cannot legislate for the nation as a whole, the city may be able to function as a laboratory for the practical application of a model of citizenship and representation that takes diversity into account. The nation-state has difficulties in becoming multicultural (Baumann, 2002) mainly because nationality (both as right and as a privilege) is still the main criterion for inclusion in mainstream society. The state is neutral neither in ethnic nor religious terms, always being represented by one culture (understood as those practices, real or perceived, that make this group feel different) which as a consequence has a more intense commitment to this state than others.

1.2 The Multicultural City

Given this model of state and citizenship makes it necessary to find other loci in which is is possible to face up to this conflict and to promote multiculturalism. It may be that local society is the best place to develop mechanisms that will lead to multicultural society in the context of liberal democracy. In this scenario, the state would define and guarantee universal, basic rights while while polyethnic and representation rights would be established locally.

How can this be done? Firstly, with reference to cities' past: the capacity to accommodate cultural difference is a major motor of social and economic development (Amendola, 2000), being this a positive feature in facilitating coexistence (Baumann, 2002). On a practical level, municipalities can intervene to enable minorities to address difficulties that the state has not foreseen.

On the other hand, at local level there is a sense of belonging that does not clash with different cultural identities, while the state can provide only those civil political norms unrelated to cultural identity. However, it is possible neither to idealize this capacity, nor to propose a panacea for the conflicts that the presence of religious and ethnic diversity can create in western society. For this reason it is important to delve deeper in the mechanisms that facilitate improved integration at local level and to identify those that work.

It is obvious that the notion of the city becoming the appropriate level of administration for the resolution of these issues implies a conscious shift in the way urban politics are defined. It is impossible to ignore almost 150 years research focussing on the problems faced by ethnic groups when settling in western cities, from twentieth century European immigrants to the USA, to the Turks population of Rotterdam or London's Indians. The work of Musterd et al. (1998) and Van Kempen (1998) provides a demonstration of the problems linked to the presence of ethnic minorities in cities. These authors recognise, however, that the American-style ghetto is virtually non-existent in European cities and even neighbourhoods with high density of residents in difficulty never posses the ethnic, cultural or religious homogeneity of their North-American counterparts (Andersen & Van Kempen, 2002:25). In any case, is precisely because urban segregation has been shown to be so harmful for urban cohesion that new models of diversity management are needed. On the other hand, this paper deals with issues regarding political and cultural rights, posing the question as to whether the recognition of these rights and increasing minority participation in political life can constitute a step in the direction of the truly multicultural, as opposed to the segregated, city.

2. Models of Integrating Diversity

So – and this is the central point of this research - it is possible to identify different models of the multicultural city? In general, when dealing with multiculturalism there are two main approaches: a partial and a universal one, each presenting different proposals to deal with this phenomenon both at a normative and a conceptual level. The latter can be defined as the opposition between the most liberal theories (universal) and communitarian ones (partial). Communitarians defend a society based on community, on the assertion of group rights over individual ones, while - as noted above - liberal theories posit the individual as the sole source of legitimacy. The normative approach translates this conflict into law and defines how universalism and partial approaches defend different ways of regulating multiculturalism. Universalism proposes accommodation as the guiding rule in the public arena while partialists defend the establishment of specific approaches for specific sectors, risking the loss of a more general vision (Zapata, 2002). These two approaches almost never converge - not even at the local level, as will be shown later.

The issue remains how difference can be accommodated, be it national, ethnic, linguistic or religious. There are two main tendencies: authors such as Young (2000) see the recognition of difference as a means to the achievement of justice and equality (social and political); others disagree. Young writes that "the majority of immigrants want to be integrated in the job market and the political institutions of the main society. However, they are more reticent to the idea that they have to adopt the dominant culture and privatise their culture as a condition for this political and economic integration" (2000:219). The more universal approaches, on the other hand, consider that the recognition of difference rules out genuine integration for these groups and serves as a means for avoiding a discussion of the inequalities of the capitalist paradigm (Rodríguez Regueira, 2002). They defend, therefore, a traditional model of citizenship as the only way to reach integration.

The discourse between universalism and particular approaches is not by any means banal: immigration policy is to a large degree a function of the underlying philosophy. So, which integration model can accomplish the goals of multiculturalism, and will this work in cities?

2.1 The Integration City

Integration works both ways: it requires mainstream society to adapt to immigrants and vice versa (Parekh, 1990). In fact, integration is not easy in a model of formal democracy: there is, as Young states, a clear connection between social inequality and political inequality - the former leading to the latter - and formal democracy often perpetuates this state of affairs. Marginalised or segregated groups do not have political influence, which remains the property of the most privileged groups, who thus dominate both political and economic resources. One model proposed by the same author to break this vicious circle is deliberative democracy (Young, 2000) .

Deliberative democratic process requires the inclusion of all groups affected by political decisions, endowing smaller and weaker groups with the ability to influence political

results (Young, 2000:36). Deliberative democracy is a model that is feasible primarily at a local level - municipalities, not higher administrative entities such as regions. Local government can encourage and allow the active participation of citizens in political agenda-setting, decision making and its translation in policy. Even if it is clear action at a local level is conditioned by the decisions of higher political institutions, if the latter are unable to manage challenges such as the recognition of minority rights then local action becomes vital. Local governments require autonomy in formulating the policies required to deal with issues of multiculturalism irrespective of the effect decisions taken at this level will have elsewhere. Municipal government is better at responding to the demands and needs of immigrants and minorities than national government and is more suited to developing the model of deliberative democracy proposed by Young[iii]. It is in these terms that city can substitute nation as a space for citizenship.

Authors such as Amin & Thrift (2002) criticize deliberative democracy as a valid model for urban political participation. For them, cities are places for a particular form of democracy - that of associations and civic empowerment - but this does not mean that in a city all citizens and groups are capable of conducting a civil and rational discussion about the problems affecting them. However, this does not necessarily imply a rejection of Young's model: these two approaches have the potential to complement one another. They recognise that cities - repositories of institutions, associations and public space - seem the perfect location for participatory democracy (Amin & Thrift, 2002).

There are, thus, several reasons to affirm the local level as the most appropriate space in which to recognise and accept the particularities of coexisting ethnic, religious and national groups. Before accepting this premise, however it is necessary to examine it critically, as it has the potential for forming what Rogers refers to as a "territorial-trap" (1998): it is assumed that the territory of a state is a clearly delimited constant and hence that political identity can be defined in terms of physically belonging to a fixed space, within which social relations can also be conceptualised and analysed.

This notion is questionable when considering, for example, Europe. Here the development of supranational political frameworks and the presence of strong regional authorities and processes of decentralization give rise to a post-national citizenship where the expansion of political rights is not bounded by national territories. However, this does not mean that the city automatically becomes the best unit of analysis of multiculturalism in advanced capitalist societies; this level has to be put in a hierarchical context of power, including the other levels of government. Moreover, decentralisation does not always lead to a increase in the democratic process given that it may increase tensions between the centre and the periphery.

For Kymlicka (1996:104) decentralisation can in fact be detrimental for minority groups, as they may find strong opposition to recognition of their rights at a regional or municipal level. However, Kymlicka is referring specifically to national minorities seeking self-government, a process can be retarded if they do not constitute a majority in a regional or local administration following decentralisation. What needs to be established here is whether immigrant groups face the same problems in asserting their cultural rights or whether, on the contrary, local governments finds it easier to recognise them than national ones. Authors such as Castells answer in the affirmative, believing that the location of increasing cultural and ethnic diversity in cities will essentially compel local administrations to manage cultural exchange arising from ethnic difference

and to solve situations of inequality caused by a lack of integration. This will be the basic outline of new urban policy (Borja & Castells, 2002).

This suggests that even if we cannot affirm without doubt that cities will always be the most appropriate level on which to manage multicultural policy, experience - as Borja & M. Castells point out – shows that, as conflicts will first become manifest locally, solutions will also need to be provided from a top-down perspective, at least in the initial phase. So how will cities deal with this?
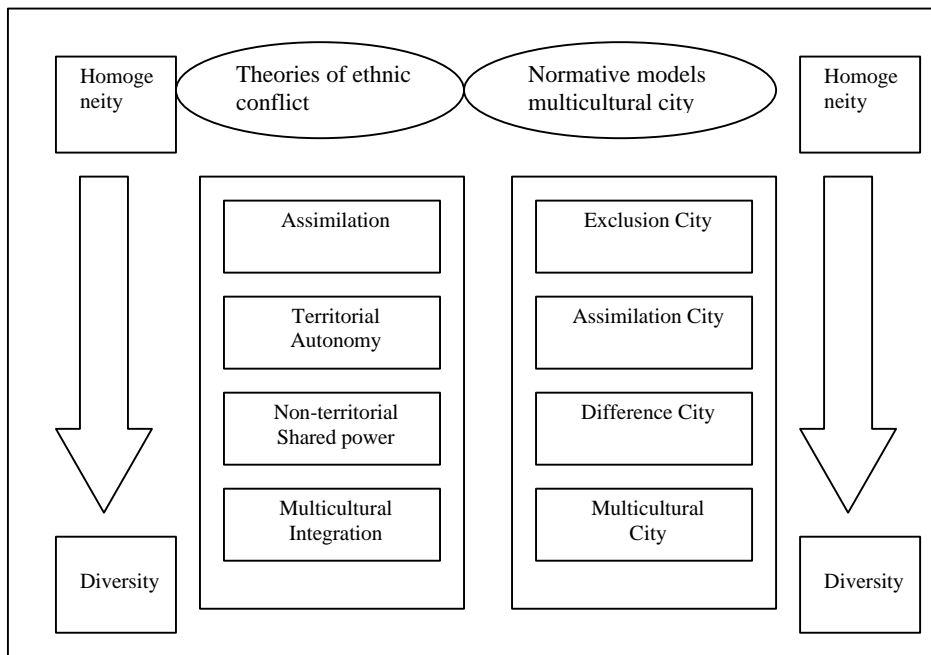

3. City Models

This section identifies solutions proposed by political and social theory to the diversity management within the specific administrative and political context of the city.
To begin with, it is important to refer to changes in the conception in local government that in the last decades have given new relevance to this level of government as opposed to more centralised approaches to policy development. In 1994 the OECD recognised that "there is a wide consensus that conventional urban planning (...) is not equal to the challenges presented by the urban problems today (...) many called for a new form of urban planning". The features of new-style urban management have been widely described by authors including Van den Berg (1993), Hood (1991), and Bramezza & Van Klink (1994). In many cases, central governments have devolved powers to lower levels of government, giving them new tasks, although often within a stricter financial framework. Cities have acquired more autonomy in the definition of policy, particularly in areas like economic development, where an increasingly business-like approach has come to be expected. Relations with the voluntary sector have also become more formal as a means to replacing and complementing elements of local government service provision. Local power is organised more horizontally, with networks that establish common elements between the public and private spheres.

There is tendency amongst some to refer to a crisis in traditional urban policy, this being attributed to demands for increasing efficiency and a perceived concomitant erosion of social cohesion (Andersen & Van Kempen, 2001). However, this is accompanied by a recognition that equity and civic participation may become crucial ingredients of urban governance in post-neoliberal, post-privatisation society. It is in this context that it becomes possible to conceive of new institutional structures capable of accommodating the demands of minorities.

What practical options has political and sociological theory developed for conflict solution and management for societies characterised by ethnic diversity? Kymlicka & Norman (2000) name them "theories of ethnic conflict", establishing a typology. An initial option is the elimination of difference, achieved through assimilation, which would have as its final goal the total abandonment of cultural specificity, to be replaced by a common national culture. Other models – which they believe are more generally accepted by researchers of ethnic conflict – are territorial autonomy, non-territorial shared power and multicultural integration based on the existence of common institutions which respect ethnic identity. All these three models recognise, to a greater or lesser degree, the legitimacy of minorities' claims to specific rights.

Figure 1. Models for integrating diversity

Homoge neity	Theories of ethnic conflict	Normative models multicultural city	Homoge neity
	Assimilation	Exclusion City	
	Territorial Autonomy	Assimilation City	
	Non-territorial Shared power	Difference City	
	Multicultural Integration	Multicultural City	
Diversity			Diversity

These theories can be applied to cities, leading to "normative-ideological" models (see Figure 1). *Exclusion city* eliminates difference by segregation, along the lines of apartheid-era South African cities. *Assimilation city* dissolves ethnic and racial differences. These options correspond with what Kymlicka and Norman identify as practices that are viable neither in western societies nor in cities.

The other options recognise the legitimacy of claims for the recognition of minority rights. They are *difference city* and *multicultural city*.

The multicultural city accepts and "normalises" the presence of different communities. Urban multiculturalism of this nature can make cultural expression (music, art, gastronomy) a keystone of urban government policy - by for instance helping religious minorities establish meeting places - or can extend to the stimulation of small business among immigrants (Rogers, 1998).

The difference city model is based on work of Young (1990, 2000) that emphasises the role of cities in the relationship between justice and difference. Young posits justice on recognition, considering the acceptance of difference a question of justice.

Several criteria have to be met before the gates of the multicultural city will open:

- Social differentiation without exclusion: an open and flexible city, where groups can relate without homogenising.
- The multifunctional use of urban space pulling together residence, work and leisure. Implicitly, urban planning that values the stimulating presence of ethnic communities, whatever the potential for conflict.
- The political participation of all urban groups living.

There are, however, some criticisms to be made of this model of city, as it can also become what it tries to avoid: an instrument of social marginalisation. Criticism

emanates principally from universalist and liberal approaches in social and political science, where the individual and not the group is seen as the point of reference in discussion of rights, duties and policy. Some go beyond this critique and state that the recognition of diversity only contributes to maintaining structures of inequality, usually linked to ethnicity, hiding them under the mantle of cultural difference (Jameson & Zizek, 1998). Moreover, the assertion of the specificist rights – particularly as a group – can lead to citizens being treated to their disadvantage on the basis of those very rights and assertions.

How does this become a reality in the city? In the creation of ghettos in areas inhabited by groups differing from the mainstream and some degree of abandonment of commitment to the individual rights of members of a community – rights which they are presumed to have exchanged for the right to representation via their community. How can integration be combined with recognition of diversity? Again Young (2000) provides an answer in criticising the integration ideal.

This ideal, both in spatial and institutional terms, is based in the notion that segregation is negative by itself and therefore integration is the goal of policy when dealing with minority rights. For Young these models are frequently established by the dominant group. Excluded groups have to adapt to them even when they deny ethnic or other groups the ability to enjoy the proven benefits of living together for purposes such as mutual assistance.

At the local level, an integration policy could include the promotion of residential mobility among individuals living in an area with high concentration of ethnic minorities to more "normal" neighbourhoods, or bussing students from a school in a segregated neighbourhood to other schools outside that area. This usually does not solve the origin of the problem, failing to address the source of inequality. The integration ideal of integration allows the national majority to define the terms of to which those perceived to be different have to submit.

With respect to this, Young talks of "differentiated solidarity". This option allows for social and political inclusion while keeping a certain degree of separation for communities with specific cultural or social identities, attempting to combine the benefits of inclusion with the retention of specificist expression. Segregation is seen as negative, but social differentiation on a group basis as less so. The implication is that various groups share the same space they will need to develop a kind of symbiosis, a sort of functional solidarity.

This approach seeks to develop a mixed model, incorporating the best of the universalist and particularist approaches. It combines inclusion-based criteria with a concern for fair results without avoiding to recognise the potential for conflict between the two. The result is the processes that define public policy will remain under continuous review as, for example the establishment of specific programmes to secure the cultural and religious demands of ethnic groups are balanced with a commitment to universal public services such as education, transport and open space.

Conclusions

The recognition of diversity can be the trigger for far-reaching reform in liberal democracies, which may be able to cope with this in a greater or lesser degree. This paper has shown how political space can adapt to diversity at local level. This requires policy that is sensitive to, and capable of modification on the basis of, the demands of the various groups that coexist in urban zones. Such is the case, for instance, with the integration ideal as opposed to that of differentiated solidarity as treated above.
However, the liberal state will remain at the end of history as long as it views unity as mutual compromise, not some homogeneous national culture.

The political recognition of minorities is, ultimately, a consequence of democratic liberalism. Minority communities reject subordination thanks to the spread of liberal ideas of equality and the political inclusion. What needs to be avoided is any tendency in liberalism to equate a particular cultural tradition with universality.

To celebrate diversity in itself does not provide automatic answers to the many problems related to the exclusion and marginalisation that frequently accompanies immigration. Recognition of difference must not be used as a mask for social and economic discrimination. Justice requires intervention at all levels, from the state to the city. On the other hand, individuals are part of communities and the road to universalism travels through particularism. Cities have opportunities. It is up to them to make use of them.

NOTES

[i] See for instance, Breully, Miller, Rokkan, Hobsbawm, etc.

[ii] From a reading given to the Forum of Political Science, Pompeu Fabra University, 11th June 2002: *Cultural Pluralism and European Polity Building: Neither Westphalia nor Cosmopolis.*

[iii] Participatory budget setting – such as the process employed in Porto Allegre, Brazil – provides one example of the ways in which direct democracy can be increased at local level. As such, it leads the way for the development of similar models for issues as minorities rights and political participation.

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