

# Situating Knowledge in Archiscape: A Traveller's Guide

Maria Hellström

## Abstract

Where do architecture and research coincide? Is there a potential intersection at all between architectural and scientific practice? Could the academic 'doctorate' offer a 'thinkable' and fruitful crossing point? Rather than trying to define such a meeting point in positive terms, this paper attempts to outline an epistemological terrain in which to locate these questions. Travelling through the length and breadth of this terrain requires certain sacrifice, certain heuristic effort, of which, from an architectural point of view, the reconsideration of both luggage and objectives might be the most radical. Throughout the criss-crossing of this expanse, two basic arguments will unfold; two projected directions

for a 'thinkable' architectural knowing. The first one suggests a disjunction of architecture from the disciplinary and object-related towards the *discursive*. This reorientation takes as its point of departure a literal understanding of discipline as a strict regime with a given, objective reference; and a corresponding comprehension of discourse similarly in the literal sense as the actualisation of possible standpoints. The second argument consists of a redirection also of discursive knowing, from the establishing of a detached and abstract 'thinkability' to a practical mapping of the thinkable as a *social and political expansion*; a successively unfolding *-scape*.

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## Résumé

Où est ce que l'architecture et la recherche se rencontrent-elles? Le doctorat académique, peut-il offrir un croisement productif entre architecture et recherche? Existe-t-il un point d'intersection possible entre les pratiques architecturale et scientifique? Plutôt que d'essayer de définir une telle intersection, je tente ici d'esquisser un terrain épistémologique où ces questions pourraient être circonscrites. La traversée de ce terrain demande un certain sacrifice, certains efforts heuristiques, dont, d'un point de vue architectural, la reconsidération tant du bagage que des objectifs est probablement la plus radicale. Au cours de l'exploration de cette étendue, deux arguments primordiaux seront développés; deux directions

projetées pour une connaissance architecturale 'pensable'. La première suggère une disjonction de l'architecture de son champs disciplinaire et objectal, dirigée vers le discursif. Cette réorientation a comme point de départ une conception littérale de la discipline en tant que régime strict avec une référence objective donnée, ainsi qu'une compréhension du discours, également dans le sens littéral, en tant qu'adéquation des points de vue possibles. Le second argument consiste en une redirection de la connaissance discursive, allant de l'établissement d'une 'pensabilité' détachée et abstraite vers une cartographie du pensable en tant qu'expansion sociale et politique; un *-scape* qui se déplie constamment.

## Introduction

Implicitly embedded in the notion of 'the unthinkable architectural doctorate' is the deeply rooted idea of an unbridgeable incompatibility between architectural practice and knowledge production. Yet, the notion is also provocative. What is at stake here is not only a resigned dismissal of the possibility of an architectural knowledge altogether, but rather the opposite – a deliberate staging of a clash between practice and theory, creativity and interpretation, concretisation and abstraction – a clash that eventually calls for a rethinking, not only of architectural practice, but also of academic knowledge production in general.

Before trying to squeeze forward an answer as to *how* 'unthinkable' architecture would fit into the matrix of the thinkable, it would however be worthwhile to linger for a while by the question of *where* this adaptation would take place. An intersection between architecture and knowledge will have to come about *somewhere*, in something like an epistemological terrain. What makes this rather exigent terrain a problem most of all, is the location of objects and objectives, of luggage and goal. And rather than trying to immediately fit architecture in as a given landmark in this terrain, we should perhaps reserve some time for an attentive rambling through and a careful mapping out of topographical and relational prerequisites.

Even though the following mapping will not be as extensive and far-reaching as I would like it to be, it will be based upon the travelling approach I consider to be indispensable for any claim on thinkability. My arguments are thus of a geographical kind: rather than simply accepting or even striving for a *disciplinary* and/or *objective* position within a structure of academic knowledge, architecture has a lot to gain from a dissociation both from disciplinarity and objectivity. What this entails however, is an 'unthinking' or amplification of the architectural object into what I here will call an *archiscape*; an expansion that rather than a disciplinary thinkability requires the development of a *discursive practice*.

### 1. A Geographical Turn: Re-routing

Described also in terms of a navigation through a fragmented *archipelago* (Lyotard 1986, van der Heeg and Wallenstein 1992), the exploration of a potential 'doctoral' terrain implies an actualisation of a multitude of positions and movements, of passageways and possible landings. Nevertheless, scientific practice has often been staged in terms of an *elimination* rather than activation of this troublesome landscape. Unfolding between real and represented, science has offered a rational projection surface, a unified and representative cross section, a rational *interface* (Serres and Latour 1995, Brown 2002) replacing strenuous being adrift. *Interfaciality* has, as a reassuring encounter or transparent checkpoint substituted all criss-crossing, as a direct access to knowledge. Is this the bearing idea of the architectural doctorate, too? Or should it present an alternative venue affirmative also of a jagged and sprinkled in-between, a venue, which, with Michel Serres' words, would constitute "less a juncture under control than an adventure to be had" (Serres and Latour 1995)?

The geographical and exploratory metaphors are in this context neither coincidental, nor original. On a more general level, they reflect what has been called a 'geographical' turn in critical thinking, a shift of focus from an interest in origins, essences and fundamentals to an interest in intersections, margins and borders. As an epistemological strategy, this 'geographical turn' has unsettled disciplinary and interfacial models of thought – visual as well as structuralist – opening up new intermediary fields of spatial thinking. Thereby, it has also caused an increasing "anxiety of inter-disciplinarity" (Coles and Defert 1998), producing not only new means and areas of investigation, but also diehard demands for purification and reinforcement of disciplinary distinctions and a rehabilitation of genre-based theories.

These attempts to secure an unambiguous architectural object have then coincided with corresponding attempts to develop architecture as epistemological scaffolding, perfectly coinciding with rational spatiality. Conceived of in terms of the inaugural *arkhé* of Hegel, architecture does not oppose reason, but constitutes its very model. Neither subjective 'nest' nor theological 'temple', architecture could even be understood as *the* spatial logic par excellence, by Kenneth Frampton poetically modified as cognitive *tectonics* (Frampton 2002) of edification, logically and constructively linking basic grounding and edifying with projective intentionality. Derived from the interfacial image of the Tower of Babel, architecture's function of unification, education and solidification is unshakable. As do the epistemological tectonics of the Enlightenment, architecture constitutes the stage for a thinkable notion that coincides with the constructible, and where architectural operations, such as 'to erect', 'to mount' or 'to join'; yes, even more sophisticated measures such as 'to synthesize', 'to identify' or 'to resist', are perfectly intelligible (Wallenstein 2004).

Architectural space has in this respect been conceived of rather as a phenomenal and cognitive *object* than a spatial and relational adventure. A *geographical turn* however, would imply a literal deconstructing of joints, lines, surfaces and volumes, in favour of an alternative and more horizontally oriented linking of architecture to the wider 'chaosmos' (Doel 2000) of the World. The architectural object in this sense has to be 'splayed out' in the face of its own interfacialism; a spatialisation in relation to which practices such as passing, dislocating, and traversing would gain a more prominent place. The anthropologist James Clifford has described this turn in terms of a shift from the *roots* and *rootedness* of localized dwelling, to the routes and intersections of translocalised travelling (Clifford 1997); a turn that subsequently would have a direct impact on a disciplinary architecture centred around a *domesticating* rather than *peregrine* view upon human life.

The distinction between a *principia domestica* and *principia peregrina* appears already in Kant's Third Critique, *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, where it opened up a disintegrated space of representation; a space of inherent tension between belonging and familiarity on the one hand and an unsettled movement, a challenging of the foreign and the unknown on the other. In Latin *peregrinus*, or *per ager* signifies the unsettling movement through an unknown landscape; a wandering, which embraced not only an unsettling of an objective exteriority, but an agitation also of the subjective interior. In his critique of rationalism, Jean François Lyotard has further investigated the peregrine principle as a prescriptive drift towards a "I don't know

what” (Lyotard 1988); a drift according to the imperative presented by a relational and open-ended landscape or ‘cloud’ of practical thinking; not only aesthetic or expressive but also an ethical approach of evaluation and judgment’.

## 2. Criss-crossing through Archiscape

Beyond tectonic scaffolding unfolds a ‘landscape’; an aesthetically defined *as-if* space of potential experience; a relational dimensionality involving not only the seamless and controlled encounter with a detectable world, but the confrontation with a vast expanse of elsewhere, of potential passages and routes. Rather than groaning over its disciplinary inconsistency, its difficulties in staying within defined limits, architectural practice should develop a sensitivity as to its composite character, which rather than ‘not yet defined’ should be conceived of in terms of ‘not yet traversed’.

In Latin, *discurrere* refers to a running to and fro over a field; a spatial detour, or an activation of in-betweens, which, rather than an edifying tectonics entails a literal ‘spacing out’ any pre-established order. Different from a synthesizing discipline, the discourse actualises the non-synthetic; a field that, following Foucault, is made up of the totality of all effective and effectible statements and positions, in their dispersion as events, as occurrences (Foucault 1972). Different from the disciplinary, with Foucault’s words “an architecture of concepts sufficiently general and abstract to embrace all others” (Foucault 1972), the discourse emerges as a result of movement, of a tracing of simultaneous and successive emergences; as potentialities rather than as fixed positions. Where discipline relies upon a cognitive view of objective reason, discourse is a running along communicative paths, along expressive sequences. As such, a discursive crisscrossing heads off from the fact that apart from logical creatures, humans are social beings, with the ability not only to interfacially hinge interior and exterior, but also to continuously establish relations with others and elsewhere<sup>1</sup>.

An exploration of the relation between architecture and knowledge should therefore take as a starting point a reinterpretation of object-oriented *archi-tectonics* into relational *archiscape*. More than a mere difference between objectivity and relativity, this disjunction implies a shift from a logic of form to a logic of the performative; from space as container to space as a *-scaping* event. Not only a relational turn, the *-scape* actualises the complex relation between

1 By analogy with this distinction, there is of course the distinction drawn up by Deleuze and Guattari between the *arboresque* – the vertical and ramified figuration of grounded knowledge – and the *rhizomatic* – the horizontal sprouting of many-headed experience (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Through this botanical metaphor, Deleuze and Guattari aimed at discussing not only a cognitive but a bodily and spatial unsettlement, with a new kind of explanatory capability. A metaphor for the linkability and continuous propagation of externalised linguistic action, the aerial or subterranean *runner* of the rhizome in this respect described not only the broadcasting potential of knowledge, but also its far-reaching aptitude as a vector of power.

2 I here also refer to American historian of ideas Martin Jay, who employs discourse as “the best term” to denote what he sees as “a corpus of more or less loosely interwoven arguments, metaphors, assertions, and prejudices that cohere more associatively than logically”, and where discourse in this usage “is explicitly derived from the Latin *discurrere*, which means a running around in all directions” (Jay 1993).

the visually evident and the socio-culturally mouldable (Dorrian and Rose 2003). The suffix *-scape*, equivalent to the Old Germanic *-shap*, the Scandinavian *-skap*, and the Old English *-ship*, literally signifies “creation, creature, constitution, condition” (Jackson 1984, Olwig 2002); although a constitution with clear socio-spatial connotations. As a man-modified dimension, the *-scape* serves as infrastructure or background for our collective existence (Dorrian and Rose 2003). As the suffix in *township*, *citizenship* or *friendship*, the *-scape* implies a shaping of a common body of relations and practices, cultural bonds, but also the mediated projection of these bonds as the *as-if* setting in relation to which one may act. The suffix *-scape* in this sense reveals a twofold meaning, connoting a concrete place of polity and negotiation on the one hand, and a potential set of human relations, an articulation of an imaginary, communicative dimension existing in its own right on the other.

Being understood as an intersection between projective imagery and senses of community, there is a presumptive risk that the *-scape* ends up being simply another form of tectonic; an aesthetical masking or moderating blurring of conflictive and deviating influences. However, at the same time, as horizontal proliferation, as desiring drift, the *-scape* also brings into attention alternative itineraries and unpredictable aberrations, thus amplifying what traditions and conventions have customized and naturalized.

### 3. Fields of Situated Knowing

Rather than trying to squeeze architecture into the framework of the ‘Hegelian edifice’ (Hollier 1998), the *-scaping* proposes a way to *situate* knowledge in an expanded exteriority. As proposed by Sandra Harding, such situating entails a relating of architectural knowledge, not only to a “methodological and ontological continuum” (Harding 1986, Stengers 1993), or in other words a continuum of form, but to the ethical, technological, financial and political articulacy expected from every practicing researcher, whether in ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ domains. This ability to ‘situate’ or ‘localize’ the knowing activity, more than a disciplinary vigilance, calls for a maximizing expansion of potentials, an exploration of relevance. Rather than ‘grounding’, the act of *-scaping* is a creative practice including a self-conscious and critical survey of the social circumstances of the knowing practice as such and the kind of structures favoured by it.

An attempt to take into account the socially and historically determined *choices* and *priorities* inherent to its own reproduction, the *archi-scape* meets up with its own fundamentals, actualising the fact that, in order to ‘situate’, we must “distinguish between the foundation and the ground” (Deleuze 1994). While *ground* expresses an orientation in relation to a sky, and “measures the possessor and the soil against one another according to the title of ownership” or “property” (Deleuze 1994), the *foundation* concerns the very soil, as well as “how something is established on this soil, how it occupies and possesses it” (Deleuze 1994, Stengers 1993). As for the proliferating *-scape*, it is its relation to the out-spread, enabling and eroding soil that attracts our interest, the material foundation for our potential whereabouts.

As foundational rather than a priori grounding, the *-scape* may be understood as a version of the discursive formation that Foucault called the *enunciative field*. According to Deleuze, we

should understand the enunciative field as “a field of sayability”, rather than “a place of visibility” (Deleuze 1986). Rather than a spatially defined and formal content, it is a field of expressive figures, an expansion that gives primacy to *utterable* rather than to the *perceivable*. Proposing a non-phenomenal situating of knowledge, the enunciative field in this respect constitutes a different kind of positivity; one of expression rather than of reflection; a positivity of that, which may be externalised rather than of that, which may be integrated with an already defined body of knowledge. While visibilities have to do with light, with lucidity, with that which may be cognitively formalized through the figure of *evidence* (from Latin *videre*, to see), the utterable on the other hand entails an entirely different activation of space, a becoming-language requiring a launching activity; an embracing rather of the *Other* or the *elsewhere* than of the self (Deleuze 1986). The positivity (or the form) of the utterance is not at all one of evidence, but one of traversal, of diagonals. Materiality, furthermore, plays a much more important role in the utterance, than in the visibility. Whether voice, written word, or architectural sequence, the utterance forms a *singularity* of substance, place, and date. The utterance in this sense is a form without abstractable, idealized *Gestalt*, irreducible to any generalized shape, and yet, as *occurrence* or *event* dependent upon an imaginary and situated *-scaping*, each time both suspending and re-enacting the existing in order to continue to exist.

Visibilities dwell whereas utterances travel. Visibilities can form coherent disciplines whereas utterances are notoriously trans-disciplinary, scandalizing the disciplinary order through discursive performance. What I would like to emphasize in this context is the fact that while visibilities profit from a representative *endurance*, formations of utterances have to be repetitively produced and reproduced. While the constructing of visibilities, including architectural form, aim at certain permanence, architecture as utterance would aim at an expansion of the potential diagonals of substance, place, and date. In terms of ‘thinkability’, evident and prevailing visibilities are not the greatest problem. The question is instead how to understand the discursive and temporary qualities of the utterance, as well as its value in scientific terms. What does knowing imply under the sign of the discursive utterance?

In order to answer the question we may turn to the writings of one of the inhabitants of this city, philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers. In her book, *L'invention des sciences modernes*, she discusses the production of scientific objectivity and its relation to a world of differences (Stengers 1993, 2000). Without any ambition to give a full account of the scientific mappings of Stengers, I would like to call attention to her unveiling of what could be called the scientific *-scaping*; the fact that there is, also when it comes to ‘strong programs’ like natural science, a fundamental indecision at play, an enunciative field of ‘non-scientific’ factors.

This field, as a field of *practices of argumentation*, has throughout the development of science been underestimated in favour of an interest in modes of perception, in ways of seeing and perceiving. Nevertheless, as Stengers points out, it is rather in the rhetorical domain that science has distinguished itself from non-science. Either articulated as a *break*, conceived of in terms of a purification of perceptual practice and a simultaneous exclusion of the tainted or contaminated, or described as a *demarcation*, a development of a controlled, prescribed, and disciplined *manner* of relating to the world, science has come about through a disciplinary

programming, including also the idea of the *competent scientist* and the figure of *discovery*. However, as there is no way of positively guaranteeing a novelty outside of the field of scientific argumentation within which the novelty appears, scientific competence consists not so much in the discovering ability. Instead, competence has to be understood as the ability to produce observability and invent factual arguments; an ability to stage a discursive field or a *-scape* within which the disciplinary practice may take place.

Within a discipline, this ability is expressed as a preoccupation with the object of study as the locus of facts and observability. As objective preoccupation it is a concern that does not have an interest outside the disciplinary demarcations. As for architecture, even though it would bring together multiple actors, none of these actors, except the architects, would be interested in defining *what* architecture, as an objective phenomenon, *de facto* 'is'. Stengers' critique is based on the fact that even though objective science or disciplinary practice sets out to create an artificial stage of its own, it does not *situate* this artifice in the *world*. On the contrary, rather than presented to the world, the scientific artifice is withdrawn or abstracted from it in order to remain objective. Instead of an agency sensible to its own more or less innovative foundations, the scientific practice is vertically locked up in relation to a *ground*; an orientation of domination and ownership, reducing the number of potentials to a minimum.

#### 4. Scapelands

What the notion of the *-scape* actualises is not only the comforting or supporting aspect of a preconceived commonality, but rather the more distressing demands of a situational being. The *-scape* in this sense also entails a disseminating 'un-thinking' of the empirically graspable 'here' into a set of possible elsewhere. In a short text entitled *Scapeland*, Jean-Francois Lyotard has described this defamiliarizing function of the expanded *-scape* (Lyotard 1989). Rather than a controlling *vista*, the *-scape* indicates the moment at which power over the surrounding is cancelled, the moment at which common sense splits up into a total encounter in relation to which the conceiving subject is transferred to a quite different standpoint from which it sees all objects differently (Lyotard 1989, Dorrian and Rose 2003). Inspired by a text by Kant (1974), Lyotard here conjures up the implications of this geographical expanse, which rather than comfort presents itself as a disconcerting crudeness, where everything remains within reach, yet unorganised, formless, resisting the compositional powers of eye and mind. *Scapeland* is not subject matter but a Matter in its own right, a matter that may appear wild as it presents itself as exteriority, as an outside. However, even though Lyotard states that *Scapeland* does not come into being in order to make up a worldly history or geography, but rather as an excess of presence, an immanent potentiality, it is still clear that the *Scapeland* is both a creative and critical dimension, as it opens up a space in relation to which "[y]ou are no longer simply [...] hostage, but its lost traveller" (Lyotard 1989).

A similar, however perhaps more pragmatic emphasis on the discursive and imaginative force of *-scaping* is delivered by American anthropologist Arjun Appadurai. If the Lyotardian *Scapeland* actualises the spatial 'unthinking' fundamental to every attempt to 'see things dif-

ferently', to reach a creative and re-combinatory state of mind, Appadurai problematizes the primacy of the *local*, of the 'here and now', which today to an increasing extent is a spatial category imbued with elsewhere (Appadurai 1990). A rapidly developing transportation and communication technology has in this respect changed the presuppositions for defining a *local*, in anthropological terms as well as scientifically or disciplinary. Instead, we have entered a new condition of neighbourliness, in relation to which imaginative projection plays a central role. In the valleys and dungeons of the network society, local dwelling means forming part of new kinds of commonalities, new kinds of clustering. "The imagination", argues Appadurai, "is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order" (Appadurai 1990).

This imaginative order however, is not associated with designated territories or domains, but is with Appadurai's words "a complex, overlapping and disjunctive order that cannot any longer be seen in terms of existing centre-periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centres and peripheries)" (Appadurai 1990). It is not susceptible to a disciplinary centralization, but has to be understood in discursive terms, as sets of relationships, or as Appadurai chooses to frame it, as *-scapes*. Global socio-cultural space is by Appadurai described in terms of *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, and *ideoscapes*, where the suffix *-scape* allows for an emphasis on the irregular shapes of these types of spatiality, the fact that they are not objectively given but perspective constructs, affected by their social, historical and political situations. The *-scape*, rather than emanating from an individual act of cognition, is constituted through the movement of different sorts of composite actors, like nation-states, multinational corporations, diaspora communities or sub-cultural movements; even smaller and more or less temporary units of agency. "Indeed", argues Appadurai, "the individual actor is the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes" (Appadurai 1990)<sup>3</sup>.

## 5. Anxieties/Propositions

The conclusion of this dislocation of architecture into archiscape would be that neither science nor architectural practice, as different arrangements of potentials, could escape their fundamental discursive and thus also political character. As Isabel Stengers has argued, no statement or utterability may in this sense draw its legitimacy from an epistemological 'right' analogous to a 'divine' or 'natural' right. They all belong to 'the order of the possible', which means that they can only be differentiated or disciplinary ordered a posteriori, and not even then in relation to a 'ground', but solely in relation to a foundation, to a 'Here we can' (Stengers 1993,

3 De-individualized and de-territorialized, the idea of archiscape as it has been described here is certainly not original, but should be related to the *de-architecturizations* of Robert Smithson, the *architectural nihilism* of Massimo Cacciari, or the trans-positionalism of Bernard Tschumi, just to mention a few. All of these prospects present attempts to articulate an alternative architectural logic that does not put disciplinary manacles on the social and political

transformation of which architecture as a practice is a part, but on the contrary try to actualize these aspects as active constituents in the creative practice of generating new utterability and knowability. As discursive outreachings, these alternative perspectives are examples of the potentials of architectural *-scaping*, not only as a means of securing space but also of providing room for the more general socio-spatial game of knowledge production.

2000). We should therefore not only call for an archiscape but for a science-scape as well; for a general heuristic practice affirming *attention* rather than *observation*. The scientific assignment would in this respect also shift from the production of autonomous objects or secluded domains, to the staging of political situations, differentiating events, spaces of utterability and of potential choice. This would also in terms of architecture entail a shift from the making of *authority* to the making of *history*, a generating *interest*, of a worldly *inter-esse*, a situating in-between. As such, neither science nor architecture would disappear, but submit to this world, re-creating, mobilizing, traversing and colonizing it, in its invention/discovery of events, of singularities, of utterances.

As a project, 'archiscaping' does not aim at rejecting or relativising disciplinary knowledge, but at actualising the fact that what seems disciplinary coherent and concrete is often abstracted from the world, and conversely, what seems detached from objectivity is often the worldliest of practices. What the figure of *archiscape* brings into attention is the fact that rather than a discipline, architecture should be understood as a *discursive practice* generating spatial utterabilities, relational statements regulating and enabling human intercourse. As a politics of spatial authority as well as change, the archiscape may then help us to distinguish, not necessarily truth from falsity or thinkable from unthinkable, but good science from bad, relevant research from irrelevant, astonishing, interesting and empowering innovation from those discoveries that are merely conserving, oppressive or stigmatising.

After a long and meandering wandering through archiscapes and Scapelands, we would be prepared to launch the statement that the problems related to the conceiving of a 'thinkable doctorate' in the field of architecture first and foremost concern the contradictions related with a disciplinary definition of *architecture qua architecture*. Such a staging of architecture as a disciplinary 'object' would imply a concurrent separating of architecture not only from its manifest worldliness but possibly also from its more projective and imaginary status as the discursive *élan* of composite human existence. Rather than a groaning over a lack of academic discipline, the architectural doctorate should develop a sensitivity as to the inherent *relational* character of architectural practice, not as a 'not yet defined', but as a 'not yet traversed'. The decisive point in this respect is not the denial of architecture's legitimacy but an expansion of its responsibility.

Situating knowing in archiscape in this respect has at least two fundamental implications. On the one hand it fills the function of a critical *unthinking* of totalising knowledge, ultimately enabling architectural research to unfold as a *discursive travelling* between established positions. On the other hand it unfolds as a differentiating *thinking out loud*; a performative thinking that does not dodge its own political consequences as an order not of the sustainable but of the possible. Violating and trespassing demarcations that would leave architects alone with their specific grounds and goals, the discursive doctorate promises to unfold in a creative *archi-scape* of attentive participation and potential choice.

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