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ALGERIES FACING THE URBAN CHALLENGE

What city policy?

Abstract :

Post-independence Algiers experienced an excessive urban development, following a very accelerated urbanization spurred by natural growth and the phenomenon of rural exodus. Faced with this urban boom, the state set up an armada of planning and urban planning tools whose objective was to control the spatial and functional development of the capital. The widespread fragmentary vision is far from allowing the development of global explanatory schemes and integrated interventions

This vision originated in the colonial period, which initiated a fragmented urbanism by the demarcation between the imported urban model and the local model, and a separatist urban fact separating the Europeans from the Algerians. The urbanization that was built on this vision thus drew its policy and its justification of the colonial logic.

The absence of a complete break with urban policy after the transition to independence has something to do with amplifying the urban challenge inherited from colonialism.

In this work, we try to demonstrate the heaviness of colonial urbanism, real estate and land speculation and their repercussions on the organization of the city.

The main objective of this study lies in the analysis of the plans and schemas that followed the colonial period, an inventory of urban research on Algiers, from 1962 to the present, which simultaneously analyzes the contexts of politics and local urban research (concrete events of urban production) and research conducted in Algiers.

It is a reflection on the most salient of them, emanating from a long scientific attendance and a practical experience of the treatment of the Algerian urban reality.

It is based on a perception of urbanization as a form of organization of space operating as a succession of rupture and continuity that does not dampen the process of its historical reality.

Introduction :

At the beginning of the 21st century, we have definitely entered an era of all uncertainties. Passionately, we seek to raise a corner of the veil that covers the future of Algeria of tomorrow through a coherent policy of land use planning. Today, our country seems to be moving towards a new urban policy, it is a wonderful awareness, but which generates different reflections, since Algeria today lives a very important urban malaise.

The rational organization of a country is strongly linked to this permanent concern for a controlled management of the city and its periphery.

In this perspective, our participation is intended to be a brief sketch of the real problems experienced by the city of Algiers, as the political and economic capital of the country, as well as an urban entity that requires a thorough diagnosis and a global approach based on context data.

The strong desire to lift Algiers to the rank of globalization, public policies led by the state have tried to implement an arsenal of legislative texts and planning and urban planning instruments since independence, without much success, the objective was of course to enforce an inherited urban planning and often poorly adapted to hope for an efficient management of urbanized spaces.

This state of affairs encourages us to question the effectiveness of these tools, as well as the logic between Algiers of the plan and that of reality? The urban phenomenon as a process, structures, and mode of management is a unique challenge and can only be understood and understood as such. The uninterrupted urban policy after the transition to independence is for something in the amplification of the urban challenge inherited from colonialism.

Presentation of the study area :

Algiers, Mediterranean capital of more than 3 million inhabitants on a fragile territory of 809 km² caught between the coast and the agricultural plain of Mitidja (map1),



57 municipalities, with 13 administrative divisions, with the largest concentrations of population, infrastructure and services.



I- Algiers, 60 years after independence: a construction site open to all winds

A symptomatic reading of the urban question of Algiers, allows us to proceed to an identification of the structural problems which are posed to the stakes of a public process of efficient urban management.

I.1- the population growth generating urban growth:

At the last census in 2008, Algeria counted 29 474 46 inhabitants, standing out clearly from the three other Algerian regional cities, Oran, Annaba and Constantine.

Algiers, the regional and national capital, accounted for nearly 18% of the country's urban population. Its capital function placed it at the top of the urban pyramid. The fact that it enjoyed a considerable attractive force at the national level, and that it regrouped most of the structures of directions, can be considered as being at the origin of this phenomenon of very rapid urbanization. The designers of Algiers of the 19th-20th centuries did not imagine that this city planned for 300 000 to 400 000 inhabitants, would count eight to ten times over a century later (Tab 1)

In this context, the European urban design concept has proved so narrow that the expansion of large cities like Algiers has been towards the peripheries, to the detriment, in certain configurations of agricultural areas. However, this expansion towards the periphery and the emergence of suburbs around cities, did not solve the real problem of overpopulation in these large urban centers.

Tabn°1 : The demographic growth of the wilaya of Algiers between 1966 and 2008

	Population (censuses)				
	1966	1977	1987	1998	2008
Hyper center	342 960	641 646	373 579	324 794	235 047
Downtown	423 748	620 041	663 064	642 572	572 179
First crown	206 259	361 328	568 447	804 428	1 004 764
Second crown	6 949	19 988	523 329	790 638	1 135 456
Total of Algeria	979 916	1 463 003	2 128 419	2 562 432	2 947 446

Source: National Statistical Office

I.2- Hypertrophy and spreading of the capital:

In the space of eleven years, the population of the peripheral communes of Algiers has been multiplied by two, or even three. Note that the rate of population growth relative to each municipality, compared to the national average (2.28% during the decade 1987-1998), is particularly high: it oscillates between 4.37% (Eucalyptus) and 8.82% (Dar El Beïda) for the communes of the East and between 0.2% (Raïs Hamidou) and 10.63% (Draria) for the communes of West and South-West (Tab2).

These figures really testify to the contribution of the external population, especially the neighboring wilayas.

Fig1: Algiers an important urban sprawl



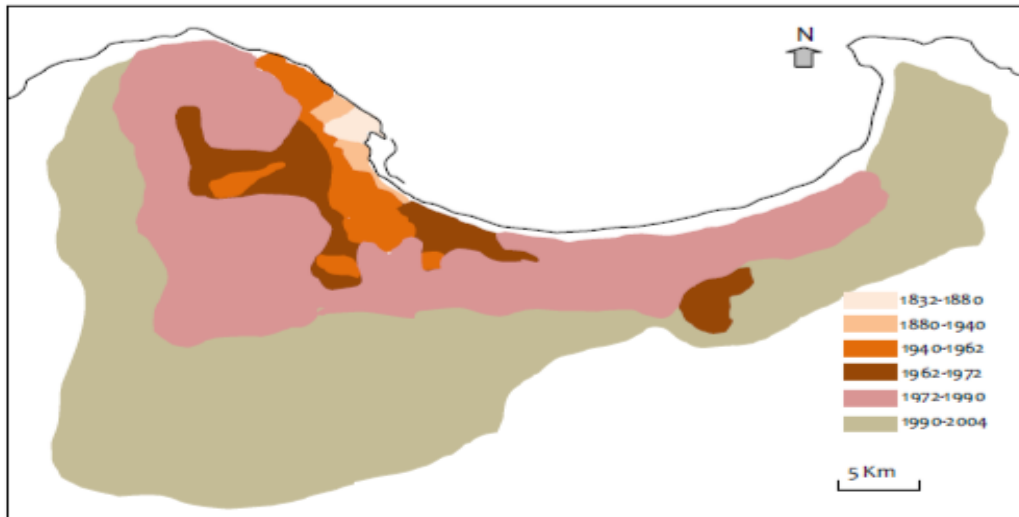
This contribution is due, on the one hand, to the presence of employment zones on the outskirts of Algiers, particularly to the east and west, to housing and relocation programs located in these peripheries, and, on the other hand, to the security reasons the country experienced during the 1990s. This leads us to consider that the urban growth of Algiers is due to an intense and uninterrupted population migration since independence, and not to a simple demographic growth of the resident population in Algiers. Consequently, this situation has generated deep spatial changes in the periphery in favor of urbanization and to the detriment of the high fertility agricultural lands of Mitidja and Sahel.

Table n ° 2: rate of increase of Algeria

	rate of increase %			
	1966-1977	1977-1987	1987-1998	1998-2008
Hyper center	2,74	- 2,09	- 1,26	- 3,2
Downtown	3,52	0,67	- 0,28	- 1,2
First crown		4,64	3,21	2,4
Second crown	10,08	38,61	3,82	3,65
Total of Algeria	3,71	3,82	1,7	1,3
rate of increase of Algeria	3,09	2,8	2,7	1,6

Source :Mondial bank rapport2009

Map n ° 2: evolution of the urbanization of the agglomeration of Algiers

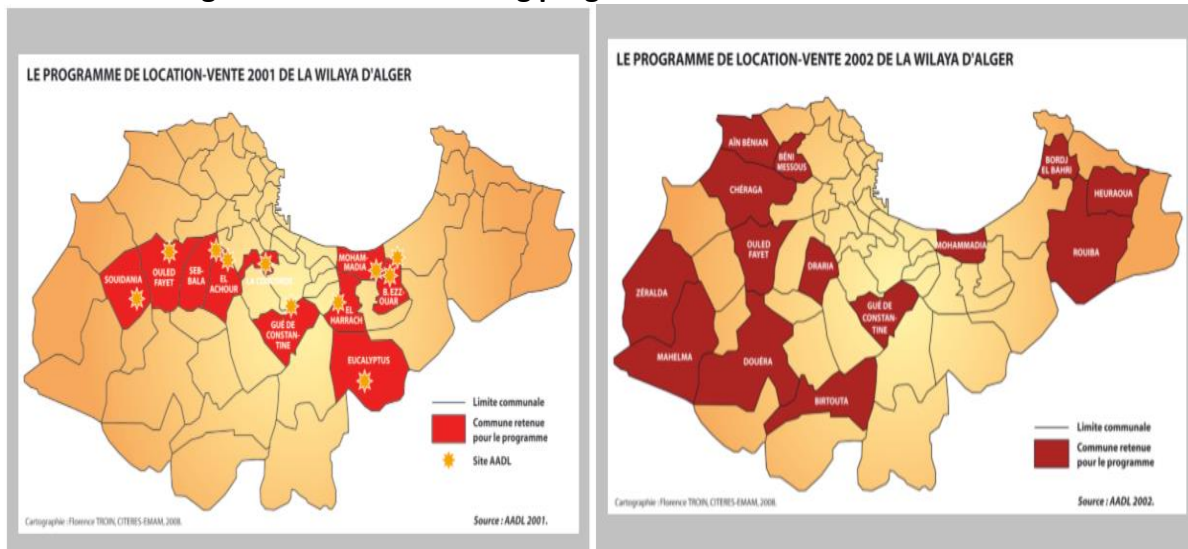


Information extraite de l'étude PAC (MATE ; 2004).
Réalisation S. Meguittif, 2008.

The production of housing has caused intense residential mobility in the metropolis of Algiers. In general, the loosening of the central communes can be explained by the impossibility of carrying out housing programs in the central communes because of the lack of land availability, since the private individual subdivision fever only occurred in the peripheral communes.

Most of the housing programs are implemented outside the Center's communes. This has been highlighted by the study done on the rental housing program "AADL". We present below two maps that materialize the rentals and sales programs 2001 and 2002 in the wilaya of Algiers.

Figure2: Extensive housing program 2001-2002



1.3- The structure of the city:

The structure of the city as for it is today complexified and appears with a great opacity . One of the traditional components of the Algerian city is the medina or Kasbah, absorbed and obliterated by the urban landscape and remains only in tatters characterized by poverty and overcrowding.

A second component is the colonial city, which has become a major reference and constitutes the city center, itself experiencing a deterioration resulting from a long period of precarious status of occupants (vacant, administrative and bureaucratic management .. .)

A third component is made of the old agricultural villages, such as Dely Ibrahim, Douéra, peripheral to the European city which had absorbed part of the exodus of the companions, in particular in the 50s, become by necessity, the spaces most posh urban settlements in Algiers.

Contemporary growth, represented by the fourth dimension to be approached by vertical habitat realizations, within the framework of the New Urban Habitat Zones (ZHUN), initiated following the 1975 ordinance.

II-The planning of the city of Algiers on a case-by-case basis:

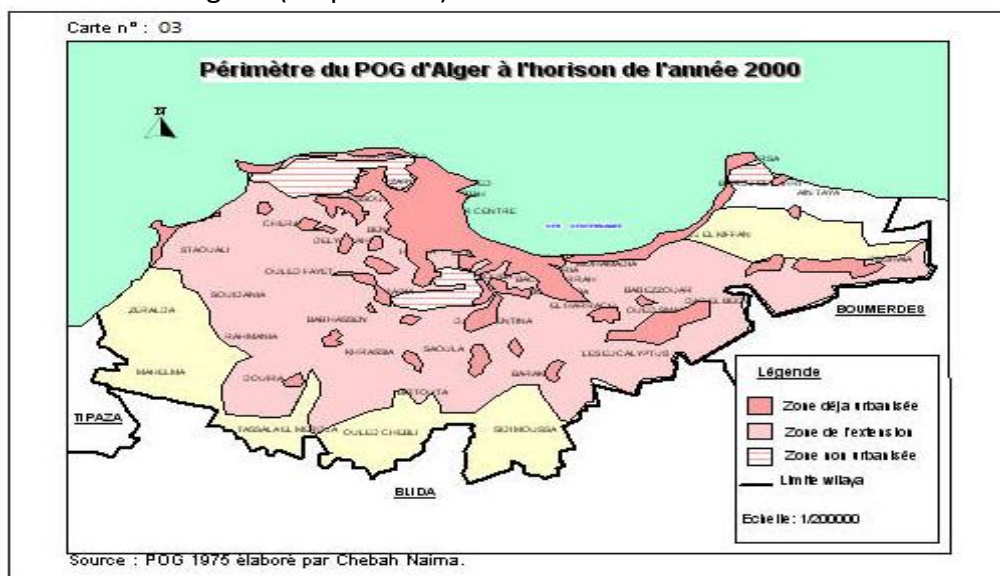
Since independence, the capital had known the development of several urban plans without any being really applied, these plans have always been overtaken by short-term political decisions.

Thus the period from 1962 to the year 2000 was characterized by the development of three instruments and tools of planning and urban planning. It is :

II-1 Algiers General Orientation Plan (POG in 1975):

The general orientation plan developed in 1975 by the former COMEDOR whose main purpose is the development of the capital and a restructuring of the agglomeration of Algiers.

According to this plan the main objective was the consideration of the human factor in aiming at controlling the population growth of the Algiers agglomeration, because according to this plan the capital must be a means for the regional rebalancing, the latter achieved by inversely migratory phenomenon subject to creating all necessary conditions for stabilization in the central region. (Map No. 03).



The proposals of the POG are summarized in:

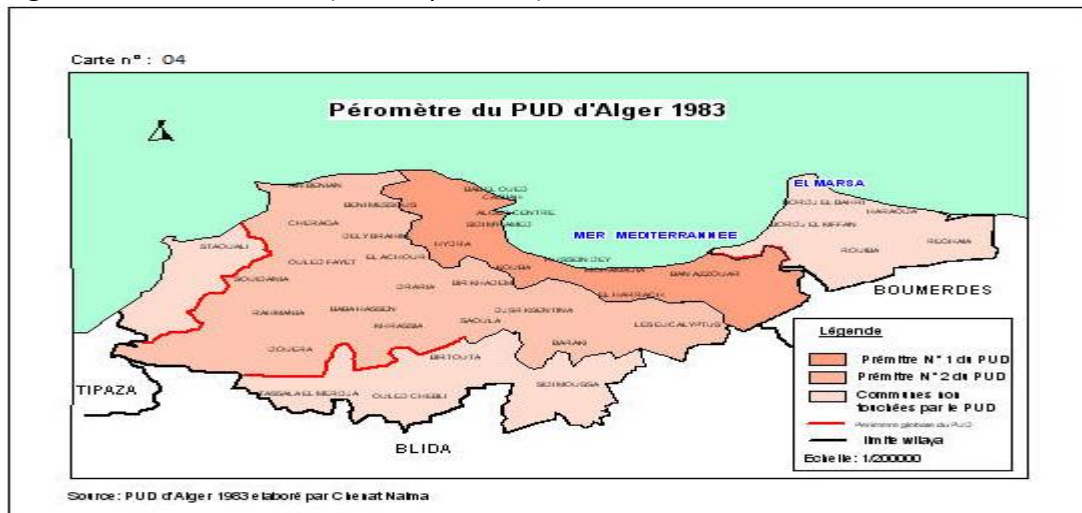
- Development of a zoning of activities in order to preserve creative spaces and recreational areas in the coastal strip and the wooded area.
- A dominance of the tertiary sector.

- A limitation of the population for the deadline 2000 to 3.5 million in the agglomeration of Algiers and 6 million for the wilaya of Algiers taking into account a change on the limits (The POG envisaged the extension of the capital towards East on farmland)

II-2 Urban Planning Plan Director (PUD in 1987):

The cancellation of the POG in 1979 automatically generated a new study on the extension of the capital, as well as the appearance of a new body responsible for this study, which is the result of the restructuring of the Algerian ex plan "CADAT" territory and succeeding COMEDOR, this is the CNERU

The CNERU has elaborated the PUD with guidelines and directives on the extension of Algiers to the Southwest (see map n°: 04).



The extension of the city of Algiers to the south-west aims to preserve the agricultural heritage and to develop the existing free spaces in the urban fabric.

II-3.The Master Plan of Development and Urbanism (PDAU):

The main objective of the Algiers PDAU was the application of the Planning and Urbanism Act, promulgated in 1990, aimed at remedying previous dysfunctions combined with urban planning that was deemed ineffective. :

Its main objectives are specifically aimed at:

- A long-term urban policy.
- The creation of global homogeneity in terms of urban structure is a systematic integration of the functioning and organization of the entire urban system of the country.
- An implementation perimeter ranging from the communal scale to a regional perspective that will obviously involve a ramified urban structure throughout the national territory (regional balance).

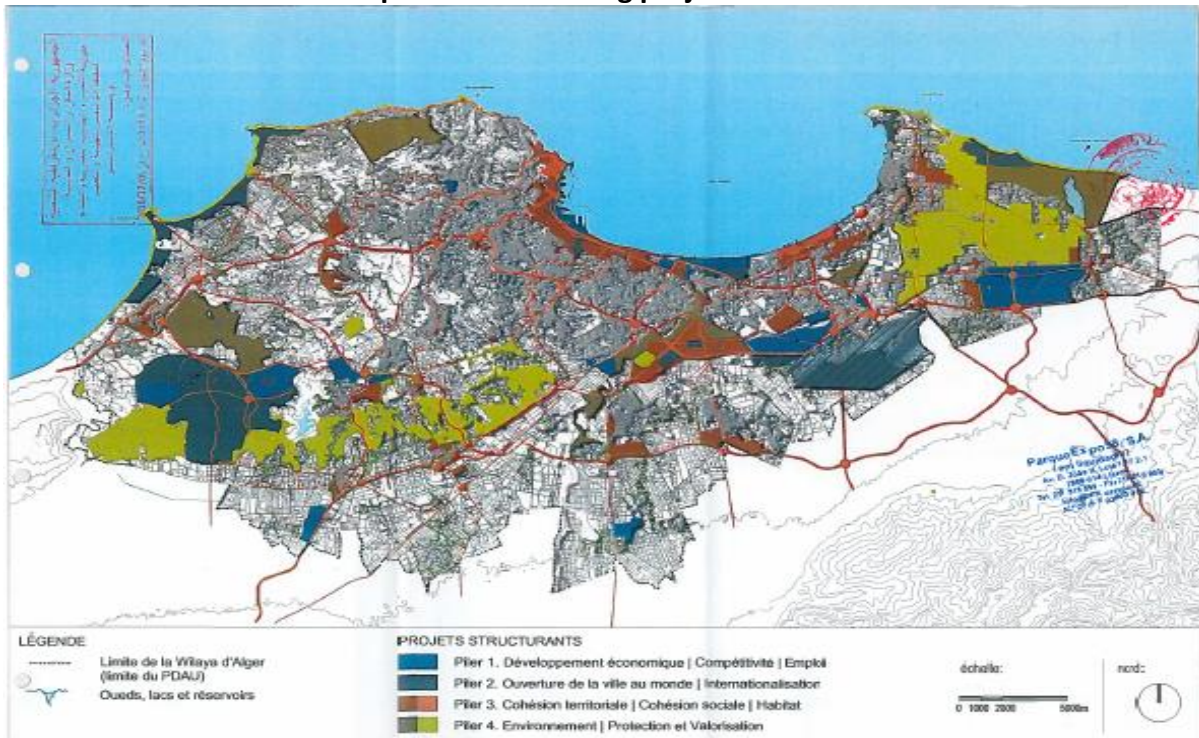
The PDAU aims to:

- Follow the same principle of the PUD, which aims as a goal the restructuring and decongestion of the greater Algiers and a reorganization and rehabilitation of different urban fabrics (old or new);
- Transfer activities incompatible with the notion of hypercentrality to new urban centers (Map 5);
- An improvement and precision in the content of the instrument interpreted in the form of objectives and prerogatives to the entire municipal territory;

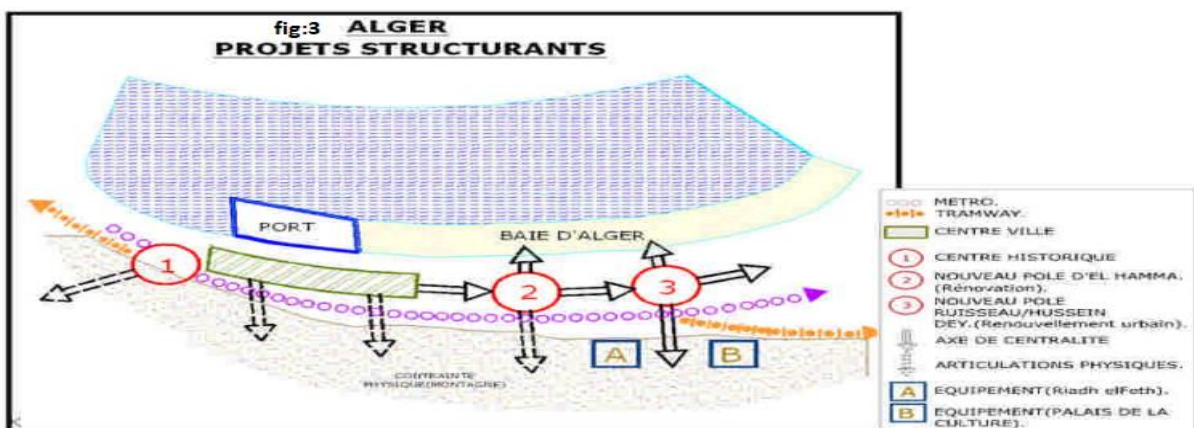
- All programming and forecasts are set for the medium and long term (up to the year 2030 for the entire capital).

Future development according to the PDAU, Algiers will be completed by a large number of large-scale projects, developed in a row, such as a pearl necklace around the bay that will free important spaces of centers and functions that meet the aspirations of the metropolis of Algiers tomorrow and wants to be beautiful big and modern.

Map n ° 05 structuring projects



By 2030, a significant population growth is expected, leading the case study to an additive population of about 90116238 inhabitants (ONS, 2008). The urbanized fabric thus has a potential for urbanization that will accommodate a surplus population. By 2030, the central functions will then extend over a much wider area than at present, occupying the hyper center. It is considered that the "major projects", contributing to this dispersion of tertiary functions, will be realized by 2030. It is also estimated that the new centrality provided for in the Algiers PDAU in the Master Plan of Development of the Metropolitan area (SDAAM) will be realized in the horizons of 2029 (fig3)



Source: Diagram of development of the metropolitan area of Algiers

III-Offset between the projected city and the lived city

The gap observed between the city projected through the urban plan and the city lived or manufactured by the action of individual or collective actors, is a reality difficult to deny.

The different modes of appropriation of space, give rise in some cases to breaks between urban elements, which have become just juxtaposed entities without any coherence between them. Pieces of city often informal, or even to suburban agglomerations not planned. The urban margins of cities are growing, their urban perimeters are expanding, the reality is finally exceeding the initial project.

These discrepancies lead to non-regulatory urbanization, circumventing the prescriptions of urban planning plans, particularly by the public authorities who are supposed to enforce them.

The origin of this lived situation is due to the fact that the urbanism in Algeria, since the independence was characterized by the urgency due to the reconstruction of the country and the catch-ups of the essential needs of the population as regards housing, equipment, infrastructure ...

As a result, urban planning implemented through the multitude of instruments was essentially concerned with programming, the quantification of needs and their spatial location.

Major programs have been carried out and in most cases have significantly increased the size of towns and the number of towns that were originally simple rural settlements.

Urban growth, rather spatial, on the one hand did not bring urban projects oriented towards development objectives but moreover generated significant dysfunctions within the cities and congest very sensitive sources of problems rather than solutions urban.

Conclusion

Algiers, an optimistic city called to be one of the country's doors to the world, through its role as national capital, North African metropolis and bridgehead between the macro regional groups facing each other on both sides of the continent. Mediterranean, gives it responsibilities that can constitute real assets for its future development.

Exploiting today's weaknesses and transforming them into the potential of tomorrow is a real challenge. But to achieve this, Algiers the metropolis needs a project carrying ideas and acquire a sustainable urban policy, which inspires its principles of experience, to create a competitive space on the economic, social and urban.

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