Communication and Information under the influence of the Hybrid War

A comunicação e a informação sob influência da guerra híbrida

Comunicación e Información bajo la influencia de la Guerra Híbrida

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ABSTRACT
The objective of this paper is to present the theories related to hybrid warfare, methodologically defining the deterrence operations commonly used in semiotic conflicts. By means of an interdisciplinary bibliographical review, it is intended to elaborate the context of communication, as well as information, in which we find ourselves today, when digital platforms, the means of almost everything, omnipotently dominate the social and political organizations of nations. It is expected, therefore, to provide a framework for analyzing the dynamics of networks as part of a political conflict on a global scale.
Key words: Hybrid Warfare; Semiotic Bomb; Communication and Information.

The information abundance paradigm and semiotic chaos

The technological leap we have achieved in the last 40 years with ICT's has allowed knowledge to not only become more robust, accessible and almost eternal, but it has also increased the capabilities of human and machine cognition. Although we are surrounded by technology and information all the time, this does not mean that we are used to, or that we have sufficient methods, to distinguish a truth from a lie: simulacra (Baudrillard, 1991). To stay up to date, we present the following methods.

The first notion comes from reality itself. Pierre Lévy (2003a) formulated his hypothesis according to which there is what is possible, and what is real. Possibility insists as an unformed body, pure indeterminacy. Reality, that which subsist, is divided into two categories: the virtual and the actual. After a possibility is determined, it can be transformed into a potential (virtus): although determined, it is not yet actual, in the sense of irreversibility. The actual is what is determined that constitutes the present time, therefore no longer in potential, but in happening. Everything that is actual or virtual constitutes the same reality. The digital medium, which supports the existence of digital objects (themselves virtual) constitutesone and the same thing with the sensorial reality that we call present, the actual. We are, thus, divided into two spaces, two times, which overlap and complement each other.

In this sense, we can understand the existence of the virtual since the evolution of human communication, in which we created the ability to refer to objects that are not necessarily there. This is what we call representation, the area of study of semiotics. In a reductionist summary, we can divide the process of representation and sign formation into three parts: the representamen, which means something, an object, to a mind, generating an interpretant. The process of representation is exclusively the replacement of an object by a sign that generates an interpretant for a mind. This applies from human to machine and allows for an increase in complexity through the relationship of three

terms (Peirce, 2005). All cultural and social meaning is imbued in thirdnesses, worked on in collective enunciation agencies (Guattari, 1992) that sediment habits and conventions. When we throw ourselves into the infinite speeds and times of digital, we are completely surrounded by new things all the time, it's differences that make a difference (information). We can understand this situation of disorientation as a semiotic chaos: there are no ready-made symbols, the subject is kept in constant focus in front of the screens, waiting for new developments in a constant flow.

Currently, the essence of the digital realm is the transmission of information through networks, and such informational compositions give rise to digital ontologies. Apparently, there is no platform equivalent to the Real that allows a collective agency of enunciation to take place in analogic ways. The rules of the game change qualitatively when we enter the digital realm, and not just because it is virtual, but because their rules are created by the companies that manage such platforms primarily structured as a guarantee of profit and market dominance. We are socially obliged to be present in these digital media, since most of the socialization processes, largely due to the confinement resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, have been transfigured onto such platforms, and we enthusiastically adapted to the forms of expression contained on them. Thus, migrating from the real world to the digital, the social meaning generated through communication is lost, and we end up repeating the culture of silence (Lima, 2015), in which instead of providing conditions for political expression, we hinder voices in favor of a hegemony and we alienate the subjects of their participation in the national historical process.

Digital platforms act as mediators of information, data, money, goods (virtually almost everything we know), and can freely give greater or lesser exposure to certain information. This aspect of mediation is extremely pernicious due to its ability to condition the action resulting from the discourse, to work the potential. This implies that there is a precedence that we can attribute to social media before the event itself, the actual one. Or of platforms in relation to processes in the world. What is allowed or not allowed to be stated or done on the networks ends up determining, in their respective proportions, what will leave the virtual and become an event. Therefore, the mediation of information is something that has immense disruptive potential and deserves attention as it is observed that the digital realm supplements the actual in what it fails, be it to the capital or social.

The digital is constructed not as a parallel reality but integrated with the historical reality through the subjectivities that roam between both worlds. It thus allows the virtualization of social and political processes so that they can be modeled according to the modus operandi of the platforms on which they are located. This allows not only the cooptation of social mobilizations and learning, but also leads to the modulation of the processes of subjectivation and distribution of powers in the social organization. Mediation allows control of flow. Strategically speaking, the digital realm is a new terrain under which we can operate unconventional guerrillas, and due to the scope of networks, the possibility of interference in nations around the world is even greater.

The information abundance paradigm and semiotic chaos

Hybrid warfare[1] is the name given to the method of indirect warfare that uses non-conventional means of warfare[2] and Color Revolutions together. "This model begins by implementing a Color Revolution as an attempted soft coup, which is soon followed by a hard coup, through an Unconventional War, if the first fails" (Korybko, 2018, p. 6). These are indirect methods that allowed the national interests of the United States to be implemented.

The geopolitical context for the emergence of this model goes through the idea developed by Brzezinsky (1997) that Eurasian integration will imply the end of the rules-based international order, causing the axis of power to shift to Russia and China, giving birth to a multipolar world. This is a complete anathema to the national interests of the United States. The impossibility of carrying out a conventional confrontation with Russia, the current leader in military technology, makes hybrid warfare the best choice, allowing, through color revolutions, regime change in countries peripheral to the great powers - such as Taiwan, China and Ukraine to Russia.

This model of conflict derives from the notion of fourth generation warfare, which implies thinking about psychological operations, manipulation of narratives, televised news, in which conflicts are decentralized and fluid – nomads fighting against the city (Deleuze, Guattari, 2012). The tactics and strategies against numerical power permeate the chaos of collective action for the liberation of the individual from a restricted code of behavior, to emancipate him to use all possible and conceivable means to carry out the ideological movement. The aim is to

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1 It is the name given to the hybrid conflict that mixes the notions of war and peace, direct and indirect conflict. This includes the use of fake news, diplomatic law and foreign electoral intervention among other methods.
2 Unconventional warfare is one that does not use traditional means (conflicts on battlefronts), contributing to insurgencies or resistance movements against a foreign government, using political, economic, military and psychological means.

interfere in the OODA loop (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act)[3] of its subjects. This makes it possible to unleash chaos on the social system through 4 principles: modeling the initial state of the system, as well as its underlying structure, to then work on cohesion between the actors and finally stimulate frictional energy between the chosen actors. To change energy, a change in software is used, or the diffusion of an ideology: the individual's political feeling is modified, so that this virus begins to spread and be disseminated. Once the ideology is implemented, the color revolution begins using social critical mass against the State to destabilize it or even overthrow it through information manipulation.

Color Revolution is the intangible form of conflict used to promote regime change, replacing East-facing leaders with West-facing ones. Its core is the transmission of information among the population, making extensive use of social networks and all possible communication channels, even those not developed for the occasion. A consensus manufacturing method is used so that the ideas that are produced by the movement lead the individual to action guided by the idea itself, that is, to determine the potential for action through the development of an ideology that guides the subjects during the movement. In the context of the Color Revolution, ideas against the government are manufactured and disseminated in order to generate popular discontent against the government status quo.

The reverse neocortical warfare[4] aims to study the cultural values of a respective State to use language, images and geohistorical information to better manipulate the perception of individuals and guide their actions through the ideas that are created. Distribute such information on a network, conducting information operations and managing perceptions to generate fear, dissatisfaction, disturb and disorient the people, and we have the initial conditions to establish a Color Revolution. The larger the size of the network and the number of nodes, the greater the momentum, and the more the movement becomes legitimized before the public. Hence the concept of hive mentality emerges: a collective consciousness that transforms into swarm intelligence, people who orient themselves according to the same instructions and operate in synergy through instructions received through digital channels. Social networks in this sense are the ideal environment for this to happen.

This entire online movement must have a physical counterpart, mobilizing protesters into the streets, carrying out occupations, protests, always with a view to generate conflict with the government and thus using the same networks to disseminate coverage of the facts that is favorable to the movement, such as violent police actions; anything that aims to discredit the ruler. By creating an ideology, the protesters will have the reasons and the project to be ideally implemented after the coup. What is most used as an ideology is liberal democracy, which aims to free target states, seen as anti-liberal or anti-democratic. And it is in the defense of these values that a consensus is created that justifies military interventions, or manufacturing revolutions to change the regime. A true cognitive dissonance (Engdahl, 2018).

It is strategic to use national symbols and songs that are in the cultural roots of individuals, to make the movement more appealing to an increasingly wider range of people. Even more important is to internalize the cause within individuals, to the point that they transmit and engage other individuals willingly. There is pressure from new media on traditional media in terms of agenda: often to be equal in terms of audience, there is a tendency for traditional media to broadcast the same agendas as new ones, allowing what is posted on the networks to gain space on TV and radio. The use of cell phones by protesters allows events to be reported in real time, always from the perspective of the individual against the State, giving a brutal appearance to all repressive government actions and contributing to a climate of revolution; at the same time it allows individuals to receive real-time instructions on how they should behave.

In this way, the color revolution uses an event, a spark, that allows all the accumulated and chaotic energy of the movement to be directed into a single moment and ideological alignment. This event can be manufactured by the organization, such as during an act of occupation, crowds, street protests or demonstrations in which there is a disproportionate use of State force, and this is countered using urban guerrilla warfare. Society is thrown into a state of total chaos, allowing new leadership to emerge from this scenario and the change of government to be implemented.

There is the construction of a narrative, a reality, so to speak, in which the individual is inserted, together with everyone in the movement. Within this ideology, then, a consonance of thinking is constituted, characterized

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3 John Boyd (1927-1997), developed the OODA loop in the Gulf War (1990-91). The Observation process is the subject's cosmological understanding of what surrounds him/her; Orient is evaluating what you observed in search of errors and possibilities that the subject has in their context; Deciding is intuitively choosing the possibility with the highest success rate in what you seek to accomplish; Taking action is finally updating the entire virtual process of grouping, eliminating and selecting information.

4 It is the conflict model that aims to control or shape enemy behavior without destroying it, that is, it aims to influence it through perception, infiltrating the enemy's OODA loop to control the enemy's decision and action system and guide it for the desired purposes.

by swarm thinking: individuals are guided by the same principles and ways of thinking and acting. These manipulations of information can be applied reaffirming a confirmation bias, according to which the subject is led to seek confirmation of their belief in the information that reaches them a priori, ignoring everything that doesn't please or add to the worldview in question.

At the same time, there is a counterintelligence organization that manufactures memes, fake news, and misappropriation of speeches to validate the movement's ideology; something like what we saw with the "gabinete do ódio" (hate office) here in Brazil. Therefore, this constitutes a form of asymmetric conflict in which the truth is the greatest tool of deterrence. It is volatilized, according to individual beliefs, to be corresponded to in small portions in daily events, which reinforce in the subject a sufficient confirmation bias so that there is no reflective space for the information circulating, only directions, instructions. For the subject, what counts is the construction of a worldview that is constantly validated.

This is the most crucial point of an informational war: making the subject believemore intensely in a forged reality. After all, brainwashing is almost a lobotomy: cognition is altered in such a way that it becomes almost impossible for the subject to know their own reality in depth, or recognize their pimping condition (Rolnik, 2018). This implies making the content internalized in the subject as an ideal object to be pursued through movement. This is called the "hypodermic strategy". Semiotic bombs, however, operate in a different way, and their central objective is to cause informational disruption, promoting a communicational event.

Semiotic bombs do not operate through conviction or argumentation, but through perception and seduction. Therefore, these war artifacts would be much more sophisticated than advertising slogans that work through repetition and conditioning. Semiotic bombs are specific interventions that operate by shock to create consonance and a "climate of opinion". This is when the bomb turns into a communicational event. (Ferreira, 2021, p. 6)

This disruptive effect is achieved by interfering with the mediacontinuum, producing a shock wave that lasts for days or weeks. It is not actually about the message, but rather about the effect on individuals' perception, changing the way events are understood through a mutation triggered by the event. In other words, it does not appeal to a logical chain of reasoning according to which the observer can infer about a given event; but rather bombs designed to disrupt perception and, therefore, alter meanings. "They are bombs aimed not at reason, but at perception" (Ferreira, 2021, p. 5).

In this context, the qualities of the observer determine the initial conditions of the system to be chaoticized, and deserve great attention. Abandoning the receiver as a figure displaced from history and culture, we assume it as a subject with a place of representation determined by his position in space and time (Lima, 2015). We must also understand that social meanings are produced by collective agencies of enunciation and are therefore subject to the platforms on which these social interactions take place. If previously such agencies had spatial restrictions, today we know that the geographic location of users who post about events has little influence on their opinions, since the narrative of events spans a national and global sphere. Therefore, the agencies that operate in the digital promote qualitative change in the social construction of meanings, which implies that such a cybernetic structure can be easily coopted in the movement of a color revolution.

The chaos generated by a semiotic bomb has total control of the initial conditions of the system, since it itself establishes chaos, and, therefore, has the capacity to guide the reactions and perceptions of the event due to a worldview, or ideology of some movement. Therefore, the subject is placed in a state of firstness. This corresponds to the state of sensory apprehension, so to speak; we are talking about the first moment of contact with the sign, which implies pure quality, a univocal relationship between the object and the interpreter. The subject is perceiving the differences and making a difference to them. The semiotic bomb proceeds by leaving the subjects in a catatonic state, anxious for the next chapters of the story. This allows to guide the course of logical thought, and this apprehension of signs is only the first step.

Secondness belongs to the relationship, which we call significance. However, the process of secondity can take time, it can be quick, depending on the conjuncture of signs apprehended within the same signifier. It is the process of understanding and assimilation that the individual goes through. The beauty of a collective intelligence (Lévy, 2003b), in a network, is that the entire process can be televised, taken from forums, messaging applications and other digital platforms, and publicized: a collectivized, platformized secondity.

Thirdness is the consolidation of meanings on both the individual and social spheres. It proceeds by developing a consensus according to which the event will be interpreted. And in collective thinking, the conclusion is also collectivized. Therefore, semiotic bombs can be used as a method of persuasion and convincing public opinion regarding certain events through the semiotic procedure of shocking, explaining and then concluding and pointing out values.

We can bring the chaotic social closer to the Évolon model of transition between chaotic attractors (Mende, 1981; Vieira, 2015), whose phases are as follows: breakup, to destabilize the individual's perception; preparation of the public to adapt their perception to what is desired; expansion of favorable opinions by collective network agencies, or likes and shares; transition from public opinion as a whole to the new model of signifier; maturation of new opinion according to new regulatory and variable principles; and then new climax, when such opinion becomes old enough to be discarded and replaced. This approach is merely conceptual, transposing the organization of phases between chaotic attractors to the formation of public opinion through the media.

The chaos that is occurring today is measured through various sensors on cell phones, in social media measurements of time and engagement. Thus, the most likely consequences of increasing a system's energy (tipping point) is that it will eventually go through chaos (tipping cascade) before restoring order within a new set of attractors. The simulacra are like guides, anchors that allow the subjects to situate themselves in the chaos of the communicational event. As Korykbo correctly points out, it is weaponized chaos.

We will use the phrase formulated by Carl Von Clausewitz, a classic reference in military anthropology, as a form of conceptual approach: "war is just an extension of political activity; that it is in no way autonomous" (Clausewitz, 2014, p. 718). Both war and politics are about the will and intention of the actors. And in a way, both seek to subjugate their opponents to assert their will. From this relativization of war and politics as a continuation of each other, we can understand that this nature of the confrontation ends up operating in the incongruity of desires: not only a disrespect and consequent erasure of the will of the other, but a true annihilation. In the inability to deal with difference, we naturalize hatred. In other words: they are the possibilities that individuals see as a future and that are incongruous and trigger a reaction of hatred and repulsion.

What is observed today, to the detriment of the mediation of almost everything by online platforms, is that the digital world resembles a political arena, in which people from all sides, of all convictions and projects fight for their like, for their engagement, for your attention (Empoli, 2019). Mechanisms are even developed to extract behavioral surplus (Zuboff, 2019) through the use of algorithms that end up addicting the subject through the production of dopamine when receiving content and peer validation. And in this flow of information that we consume daily, there is a fight behind the scenes to see who will appear in what order in your feed.

War, like politics, ended up spreading across all sides of the digital world. In fact, the social being is political by its very ontology, but there is a politicization of absolutely any subject, as if every event had at least two opposing views. Each side will fight to defend its truth, without there being, in the end, a winner. Infinite war. Thus, what is observed is that every event becomes ammunition for an emerging conflict. And it can be done on a global scale. Expectant subjects observe the communication events from their stands, hoping that the narrative will go towards their side of the story. And when war and politics converge, we can see the epitome of animosity, to the point where major media outlets focus all their attention on reporting the conflict.

What is observed in the current conflict in Ukraine (Fernandes, 2022) is a split in narratives, in the same way that the Iron Curtain divided West and East, today, we are divided between NATO and the integration of the global south by BRICS. It's about the power of narrative, about who is winning the war. This proxy conflict unfolds as existential: between a unipolar and a multipolar order. But there is no need for the subject to understand such complexity about the events, it is enough to know who the enemy is and who is the friend. We remember Orwell's brilliance in describing a world divided between three powers, of which apart from his own, we have friend and a foe. And it doesn't matter which is which, what matters is the reason, the icon of the ideology. This implies that conflict occurs on the ground, physical, conventional warfare, and on digital fronts: unconventional conflict, determined by the co-option of the imaginary.

But this phenomenon can also be seen in political disputes. Giuliano da Empoli (2019) describes how, around the world, several people took control of statistical methods of engagement and persuasion and managed to win votes by manipulating people's imagination and public opinion. This is done by coopting movement and events over time. Thus, we are easily subsumed by the apparatus of financial capital allied to liberalism (neoliberalism) as gears: we function according to coordinates emanating from our mobile devices. Turn right.

This implies thinking, firstly, that information no longer assumes a verisimilitude character. It has its own hyperreality and coherent with the subject's macroscopic perception and has become a technology in favor of interests and powers capable of manipulating information. Secondly, the truth has become confirmation bias itself: relativized as much as possible, it corresponds to beliefs, and no longer to facts. But such an operation is only possible due to the distance between sender and receiver of messages, or between event and viewer: how can we confirm? This implies assuming Baudrillard's pessimisms and diving headlong into simulacra.

In the cybernetics paradigm, control is essential to achieve objectives. So we use technologies, the same ones that serve to connect people, to also monitor them, and then understand them in a way that they don't even

understand themselves. We are coopted because statistics don'tlie:the mathematical, logical truth rarely tends to fail. These are scientific methods that led to the unprecedented manipulation of subjects, confirming the hypothesis of technofeudalism: a digital economy based on debt bondage (Durand, 2020). What remains of politics in an algorithmic paradigm? Reduced only to numbers, to majority will; variables that do not match the modus operandi of human history.

This implies that the social process of cultural progress is distorted at its core. We are no longer able to engage in the historical progress of Western culture because we already know that its ends were revealed in Auschwitz (Flusser, 1994) when the human being was transformed into object, and the rest is just a simulacrum of this event: wars, psychological operations. They are the result of the perverse use of technologies, or rather, technologies to control and kill. We repeat the same mistakes in a more perverse way: we allow technology to take control of social processes.

The status of truth in hybrid times

The notion of hybridization entailed by the concept of hybrid war also implies the mixing of the spheres of public-private, peace-war, place-time. This produces a complete relativization of the concept of truth, based on the idea of a qualitative change in the social process of validating information itself. What used to be a costly process, which required time and space for discussion, is now delimited by several flexible variables that can be perfectly manipulated on online platforms, consonance of opinions between the individual and their peers, as well as the notion of credibility of a media outlet news or public persona. The very notion of truth can be understood in a simple way when analyzed from the perspective of the person who says it. Paresia, analyzed by Foucault (1985), refers to true saying through respect for a personal stance on the consequences of saying something in a given context. Truth thus assumes a moral figure for those who are forced to pursue it in their actions and statements to the detriment of possible retaliation. A truth against the lies of the world.

Therefore, truth has an intimate relationship with the forms of governance and management characteristically employed in Western societies. However, the phenomenon of networks dispels this conceptualization by offering a new ontological substrate for information, which now runs free in infinite spaces and times. Within the spectrum of hybrid war of armed chaos, the more truths that are constituted, the better it will be, since what is expected is to produce contradictions, to flood the subject with so many variations of the truth that he is not even able to judge which has the most true character – be it scientific, theological, whatever.

The power of truth, today, rests on engagement numbers. Therefore, the truth per se, an end in itself, became merely a metric. How many truths, and which one most engages individuals? The quantum politics referenced by Empoli (2019) is based on these ideological bases. The truth becomes an instrument. Pierro Leirner (2020), by introducing Gregory Bateson's concept of schismogenesis, based on two others (double bind and feedback), presents a methodological tool that allows us to understand the role of truth today. Schismogenesis is socially produced through the process of individual differentiation, in which a behavior by 'A' produces in 'B' a response for which there is a double bond, and in the dynamics of relationships the behaviors feedback on each other, generating this mutual dependence that tends to produce extremes. In other words, it no longer matters what is said and how it is said in its correspondence with truths, but rather the productions resulting from such fabrications. It is about the relationship that the individual will establish with the truth in question. Whether you are a supporter of 'A' or 'B', both are engaged in the same movement of schismogenesis that can lead to the explosion of a semiotic bomb.

We are all led to seek the truth to base our being in the world (dasein), to guide our perceptions. Reviving the OODA loop once again, the truth is at the forefront. We always observe from a set of pre-conceived values and knowledge, and, therefore, truths must conform to the most diverse ways of seeing the world, at the same time that they must be eye-catching, captivate the eye to generate engagement. And, finally, that such information remains active in the person's head. This implies that she will be able to use such information as a guiding factor in the world. We enter the order of the signifier: they are the secondary conceptions, therefore procedural and contiguous/continuous, that the subject elaborates so that it can infer meanings, that is, determinations, decisions. Suddenly the person is contributing to the cause without having the slightest idea of it. This indicates that the movement has acquired control over the subject's OODA loop.

It is important to highlight that the latency between the event and the projection of fabricated information is crucial for interference in the loop to be effective. There is, therefore, an information race for posts on social media to be made as soon as possible, to be the first to offer an insight into events. This implies that within the color revolution project, this is already calculated and prepared in advance and, therefore, will certainly engage individuals in the

movement. But this raises the question of the counter-effect of this informational guerrilla. Pierro Leirner (2020) puts the solution as skipping an entire loop in the cognitive process (cognitive warfare), that is, being ahead of events; or else propose a different event that mobilizes and captivates the subjects out of a feedback loop of the movement of the revolution towards its counter-effect. It becomes a conflict for the subjects' attention.

We must even recognize that the instrumentalization of news networks and vehicles and the entire digital ecosystem has already been appropriated by these technologies of war. There is, therefore, a synergy between the notion of hybrid war as a form of exercising control through armed chaos to achieve wills – whether individual, institutional, the empire or the crowd – and the areas of scientific knowledge that develop methods for this new terrain of conflict: the digital. In fact, there is real competition for people's attention at all times, and the most diverse actors fight asymmetrically for the power to influence us. What we would like to propose here is that we have entered a paradigm according to which there is a use of digital platforms, as a means of almost everything, to influence public opinion in a nation. What is not clear is how much the platforms are complicit in such procedures.

We want to emphasize the importance of such recognition of a scenario of perpetual war embedded in the means of communication and information that we use daily. This implies that the ontology of information itself has been changed. We approach technoimages (Flusser, 2007, 2002), which can be summarized as sets of information manufactured according to communication technologies, imagery, computing, among others necessary for the process of accessing information, as well as produced according to an entire order of meaning. In other words, they are of the order of perception and cognition, to be highly effective in interpretation, persuasion and convincing, thus generating the long-awaited engagement. And, if it has images, it is real. Although we can manufacture virtually any type of image using computer graphics and artificial intelligence techniques, there are few methods of distinguishing between manufacturing modes.

This implies that the values that guide the production of information are no longer concerned with the category of truth, therefore verisimilitude between representation and object, but rather with the ends that information, as a means, can produce: the appealing function of language. And no truth is irrefutable, because according to a complex network of 'alternative facts', the subject will be able to build their confirmation bias on the simulacra, and, therefore, choose which Matrix to live in.

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Thanks

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