Press Release

The Official Portuguese Representation at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 2023 presents Fertile Futures, a project curated by Andreia Garcia and deputy curators Ana Neiva and Diogo Aguiar, which focuses on the problems of water resources in seven Portuguese hydrogeographies, to stimulate thought about a fertile, sustainable and equitable future. Commissioned by the Directorate-General for the Arts, the exhibition Fertile Futures will be presented between May 20 and November 26, 2023, at Palazzo Franchetti, in Venice.

As a vital element for human and non-human species, but also metaphorical and emotional, freshwater is simultaneously political and economic, which is why public debate on the protection, management and future of this natural resource is urgent. These are global issues with dramatic manifestations in specific distinct areas within Portuguese territory. Focusing on seven hydrogeographies, Fertile Futures commissions young architects, in collaboration with experts from other areas of knowledge, to present models for a more sustainable future, in a non-hierarchical cooperation between disciplines, generations and species.

The seven cases under study exemplify the anthropocentric action on water, natural and finite resources with implications for the Tâmega Basin; the International Douro; the Middle Tagus; the Alqueva Dam; the Mira River; the Lagoa das Sete Cidades; and the Madeiran Rivers. The production of unpublished content, based on the strategic complementarity between practice, theory and teaching in architecture, defines the tripartite approach to experimentation and reflection that focuses on the reality of the Portuguese territory.

Fertile Futures involves new generations in the development of solutions for future reservoirs and defends, between Portugal and Venice, the relevance of the contribution of architecture in the redesigning of a decarbonized, decolonized and collaborative future, thus contributing to a discussion that is common and global, in direct response to the call of Lesley Lokko, curator of 18th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 2023, whose title and theme is “The Laboratory of the Future”.

Fertile Futures
The internationalisation of Portuguese culture is a strategic priority of this Government, with a clear commitment to the international projection of our artists and the affirmation of our historical and cultural heritage. This includes participation in events of great international reputation and projection such as the International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, in which Portugal has participated with official representation since 2002, but also the International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, the Istanbul Biennale, the São Paulo Architecture Biennale and the Prague Quadrennial, which are all important moments for the realisation of our commitment.

Over its many editions, the International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia has been a privileged space for each country to show off its cultural heritage and contemporary architecture to an international audience while promoting networking and international cooperation.

La Biennale di Venezia has also played a significant role in promoting a critical and informed debate on the practices and paths of contemporary architecture, representing a source of inspiration and a permanent challenge to professionals in the field, but also to curators, academics, students and, in general, to all those interested in the work and production of contemporary architecture.

A commission of consultants (including Paulo David, representing the International Association of Art Critics – Portugal; Nuno Sampaio, representing the Casa da Arquitectura; and Ricardo Bak Gordon, representing the Portuguese Architects’ Association) was formed to propose three curators to participate in a closed competition for the selection of the curatorial project for the selection of the official Portuguese representation at the 18th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 2023. After this initial proposal, the three projects submitted were assessed by a panel made up of Isabel Raposo, Joaquim Moreno, Julia Albani and Nuno Grande, with the project Fertile Futures, by curator Andreia Garcia, selected as the official Portuguese representation.

Fertile Futures directly addresses the issue of freshwater scarcity, taking as its starting point the experience of the national territory in a work that seeks to encourage the development of new strategies for the management and conservation of water resources as an essential step in building a fairer, more sustainable and more diverse future. Complementing and in permanent dialogue with the exhibition project, the work features a clear dimension of debate,
speculation and pedagogy through the initiatives that make up the curatorial approach, such as the Thinking Assembly and the International Summer Seminar, in collaboration with specialists from various fields, demonstrating the multidisciplinarity of contemporary architectural practice. This approach is a direct and particularly original response to the call by Lesley Lokko, curator of the 18th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia 2023, under the title and theme “The Laboratory of the Future”.

Portugal has a strong participation in the International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. A response that is simultaneously creative and innovative, and which corresponds to a trajectory of continuity, contributing, once again, to the affirmation of Portuguese architecture on the international scene.
**Fertile Futures** expresses the understanding of “The Laboratory of the Future”, the general theme proposed by Lesley Lokko for the 18th International Exhibition of Architecture – *La Biennale di Venezia* 2023, which calls for, in addition to a set of urgent issues, a set of how-to guidelines. “The Laboratory of the future” urges us to create, from a methodological perspective, an exploratory programme, simultaneously clear and complex, based on laboratory and collaborative dynamics.

The title of the proposal underlines the speculative character of the Representation of Portuguese Architecture, aiming to contribute to the design of fairer, more inclusive, more equitable and more diverse Futures, but also more Fertile ones, heralding a greener, more imaginative, generous, abundant, positive, productive, responsible, feminine, and plural future.

The programme proposed by *Fertile Futures* defends the laboratory dimension of architectural design in dialogue with other disciplinary areas, and the ability to move forward, seeking to imagine the future, requiring the contribution of multidisciplinary discourse in the design of solutions to emerging issues that tend to go beyond the singular domain of the work of architects. While discussing and proposing strategies for the management, protection and transformation of freshwater and contributing to a debate that is common and global, *Fertile Futures* focuses on the scarcity and management of this resource, in the Portuguese territory.

Investing in the strategic complementarity between practice, theory and teaching in architecture, a tripartite approach to experimentation and common reflection is defined: seven Hydrogeography Workshops, whose work is the body of the propositional exhibition in Venice; five Assemblies of Thought, moments of reciprocal (re)learning based on the coexistence of knowledge; and an International Summer Seminar where students collectively rehearse speculative installations.

**Hydrogeography Workshops**

Expanding the ephemeral existence of a national representation in Venice, *Fertile Futures* will involve new generations in the development of solutions for the reservoirs of the future, based on close contact with seven hydrogeographies, exemplifying the anthropocentric action on water, natural and finite resources.

Young architectural ateliers are encouraged to work with specialists from other disciplinary areas, starting from design laboratories. Based on innovation and mediation strategies which seek to understand different scales of reality, the common imagination of more positive scenarios is encouraged and other ways of performing architecture are also fostered.
Based on local involvement with the specificities of territorially dispersed hydrogeographies, the propositional solutions under development in the Hydrogeography Workshops aim to promote forms of global action, as well as the discussion of new ways of operating at the territorial scale, as well as at the small scale.

1. The water of the Tâmega Basin, once at the heart of all the irrigated land, is today the primary resource for one of Europe’s largest green hydro energy plants. The Tâmega Electroproducer System, also known as Gigabattery, has brought significant changes to the region by demonstrating the contrast between two ways of managing water: as a local and common asset and as a commercial product for creating energy. By exploring ways of articulating between the different scales and times present within this territory, a dialogue begins, born of the mediating capacity of architecture, seeking to mitigate the impact of this metamorphosis of the local territory, flora, fauna and human life.

2. The investigation focuses on the upper reaches of the banks of the International Douro, a region emblematic of the relationship of dependency and sharing that exists between Portugal and Spain, and which underlines the relevance of water in soil and ecosystem conservation beyond its mere use as an energy source and an essential good for human consumption. As a way to combat the desertification of an increasingly depopulated area, we propose that ancestral techniques and natural systems be relearned, and that the symbolic dimension of natural elements be restored.

3. The impact of the mining industry is plain to see in the region of the Middle Tejo, not least in the widespread contamination of the water in the Zêzere River and the surrounding water tables. The detection of high levels of heavy metals, above the World Health Organisation’s recommended maximum, is a particularly grave development at a time when a proposed transfer is being considered to increase the flow of the Tejo River, thus guaranteeing water supply to the Lisbon metropolitan area. Rethinking the policies and priorities of extractivism, the proposal advocates the progressive renaturalisation of the landscape, in a manifest process of recovery and decontamination, based on the political and activist tools of architecture.

4. Presented in the political sphere as a textbook case, the Alqueva Reservoir is responsible for the extreme transformation of a landscape — be it dryland or irrigated
— by the creation of the largest artificial lake in Europe. Its water enables emergent energy needs to be met, stimulates growing attractiveness for tourism and, above all, contributes to the high levels of productivity in the incumbent agrobusiness, which is simultaneously responsible for the contamination and over-exploitation of the soil. By working on the consequences of this change and being attentive to its impact on the diversity of ecosystems, state structures and social inequality, the proposal explores the operational and technical dimension of architecture in the development of decontamination and soil production mechanisms and in a forecast of the future of the region.

5. The Mira River is surrounded by a wide irrigation perimeter currently dominated by exogenous investments and interests, imposed on established farming models of smaller scale or ambition. Taking advantage of pre-existing networks, high-yield farms contribute to unequal access to water resources, as well as to soil and water contamination through the use of accelerating agrochemicals. At the same time, its viability is based on the super-exploitation of immigrant workers, hidden agents, subject to precarious working and housing conditions. The proposal advocates the political potential of architecture, based on the denouncing of situations of exploitation and superimposition, alerting to the lack of regulation of this system.

6. Lagoa das Sete Cidades is the largest natural freshwater reservoir in the archipelago of the Azores, and also one of the seven natural wonders of Portugal. Despite being romanticised, farming is responsible for the accelerated degradation of ecosystems in the basin’s territory and in the water of the lakes. Excessive use of chemical fertilisers for pastures gives rise to eutrophication processes, causing significant emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, as well as the deterioration of the bio-physical-chemical balance of water, making its use unfeasible. The proposal explores the utopian (re)imagination of the region’s future, fighting the main source of pollution in the Azorean lakes, by critically rethinking land use, in direct conjunction with the social, cultural, heritage and natural dimensions that define the landscape of the Azores.

7. The repeated occurrence of flash floods in Madeira’s Streams highlights the price to be paid for the rapid and unplanned urbanisation of the territory, aggravated by the increasingly frequent peaks of precipitation, as a result of climate change, whose increased responsibility also lies with the unbridled
construction sector, a large source of carbon emissions. The challenge implies critical reflection on the trauma associated with these events, developing hypotheses for the revitalisation of the water lines, now heavily artificial, thus recovering the resilience lost in the meantime.

The work developed occupies the seven exhibition halls in the Palazzo Franchetti. In the central hall, a water line organises the space and its flow emanating from a gesture that evokes symbolic and metaphorical dimensions, in a sensory and emotional experience.

Assemblies of Thought

Supporting and expanding the work developed by the Hydrogeography Workshops, Fertile Futures has a group of consultants, from different disciplinary areas and a wide territorial scope. It constitutes an independent thought laboratory that informs and supports the construction of speculative architectural visions of social, environmental and climate justice, in an active and participatory way, fostering the development of multidisciplinary practices.

The Assemblies of Thought, in multiple locations between Portugal and Venice, allow for the monitoring, support and expansion of all these experiences, deepening and enriching the thematic approach, as well as contributing to “tracing a path for the public”, involving the local, Portuguese and international community in the discussion of the proposed central theme. The consultants are: Álvaro Domingues, Ana Tostões, Andres Lepik, Francisco Ferreira, Luca Astorri, Margarida Waco, Marina Otero Verzier, Patti Anahory, Pedro Gadanho and Pedro Ignacio Alonso.

International Summer Seminar

Thematic awareness, collaborative experience, and an understanding of an expanded field of action are shared at the International Summer Seminar. The “temporary displacement” of architecture students from diverse contexts, to Fundão, aims at the horizontal sharing of knowledge, through “direct experience” and the opportunity to establish new dialogues.

Fundão is part of the list of eight Portuguese cities included in the European Union Mission for Adaptation to Climate Change. The municipality is a territory that is deeply affected by water scarcity and highly intensive agriculture, fires and desertification, and simultaneously, is representative of investments in social inclusion and expanding technological developments in the inland region.

With tutoring from the teams of the Hydrogeography Workshops and the participation of national and international students, selected by open call and reinforced by institutional
partnerships, the intervention materialises in the self-construction of installations scattered throughout the territory, developing strategies for the capture, fixation, use and/or redistribution of water in the municipality of Fundão.

The International Summer Seminar aims to raise awareness in future generations of alternative ways of doing architecture, favouring the cornerstones and the hopeful future of the project Fertile Futures, beyond the period of the exhibition.

Addressing common and intersecting issues, Fertile Futures defends that a laboratory cannot present known results at the outset and, therefore, collaborating with other disciplinary areas, it promotes the production of speculative investigations, presented in word and drawing form, for an exhibition that thinks about a fertile, sustainable and equitable future, to be presented at the 18th International Exhibition of Architecture – La Biennale di Venezia 2023.

In summary, Fertile Futures reiterates the transformative capacity of an architectural exhibition, as a knowledge production platform.
2. Work mat during the study trip to the Douro, 2023. © Dulcineia Santos Studio – Laboratório do Douro Internacional, 2023
MARK
TAKE
LEAVE
4. Reconstruction of an artifact used in the decade 2020–2030 to accelerate the process of natural regeneration of the soil and water of Alqueva. Pedrêz, Porto, Portugal, 2023. @ Lara Jacinto
Illustrated postcard of the water path. Digital collage on photo by Perestrelos, Cabo Girão, Madeira, 2023. © Ponto Atelier
HEAD CURATOR

Andrea Garcia
Andrea Garcia is an architect, curator, editor, researcher, and university professor. Her research field is defined by an architectural practice that expands the disciplinary intersection with complementary areas. Her interests focus on contemporary architectural practice in an era marked by intense technological advances and a growing ecological crisis. She is founder of the Architectural Affairs studio, founder, and director of the Art(e)facts Knowledge Biennial and co-founder of Galeria de Arquitetura, an independent space for the reflection and debate on architecture, city and territory. She was Visiting Assistant Professor at the Architecture School of the University of Minho and studio tutor at the Architectural Association, in London. She is Assistant Professor and Vice-President of the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Beira Interior.

DEPUTY CURATORS

Ana Neiva
Ana Neiva is an architect, teacher, and researcher, with a PhD from the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto. She has been Visiting Assistant Professor at FAUP since 2013 and is Assistant Professor at FCAATI-ULP and Vice-director of the Centre for Studies in Architecture ARQ.ID at Lusófona University. She is a founding member of the research group Jornadas do Projeto Educativo em Arquitetura at CEAU-FAUP. She regularly participates as an author in international conferences and congresses, and in the organisation of scientific events. Her research focuses on the curatorship of architecture and on the expansion of the discipline to include the dimensions of art, society, health and well-being.

Diogo Aguiar
Diogo Aguiar is an architect, who graduated from FAUP (2008). He co-founded LKArchitects (2010–2015), selected for the Portuguese Official Representation of the 14th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia in 2014. In 2016 he established the Diogo Aguiar Studio, a multidisciplinary studio working between the boundaries of art and architecture, selected for the Portuguese Official Representation of the 16th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia in 2018. He is co-founder and co-curator of Galeria de Arquitetura, an independent space for the reflection and debate on architecture, city and territory. He was co-curator of the Architecture Programme of Maia Contemporary Art Biennial (2019), Visiting Professor in the master’s in architecture at ISCTE-IUL (2020–2021) and Visiting Professor in the master’s in architecture at FAUP (2021–2022).

HYDROGEOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

Tâmega Basin

Space Transcribers
Space Transcribers is an organisation coordinated by the architects Daniel Duarte Pereira and Fernando P. Ferreira which explores ways to investigate, represent and imagine the built environment collaboratively. Their methodology is based on immersive investigations of the places and communities in which they operate, which through site-specific mediation and transcription actions, blur the boundaries between art and architecture. This non-profit organisation, based in Braga since 2015, develops research projects in collaboration with public entities related to different themes and contexts of Portuguese territory, such as transformation processes of the agricultural landscape, in its relationship between technological development and the management of hydrographic and soil resources, or in situations of socio-spatial conflict in urban regeneration processes.

Álvaro Domingues
Álvaro Domingues is a geographer with a PhD in Human Geography from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of University of Porto in 1994. Since 1999, he has been a professor of the Integrated Master and PhD course and member of the Scientific Council of the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto and a corresponding member of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences. As a researcher at the Center for Studies in Architecture and Urbanism (CEAU-FAUP), he has developed a regular programme of research and publication on projects with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Foundation for Science and Technology, the Serralves Foundation, and the Francisco Manuel dos Santos Foundation, among others. At CEAU-FAUP his activity focuses on Human Geography, Landscape, Urbanism and Urban Policies.

Guida Marques
Guida Marques graduated from the Department of Architecture of the University of Coimbra with the master's dissertation Por uma arquitetura dos sentidos (2011), and a master’s degree from the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon (2016-18), where she gave performances in peripheral sites that made her reconsider how places with memory were built. Today she is a neo-rural, mixed media artist, politician and architect of the hinterlands who perceives architecture as a tangle of things and above all, treats it as a healing process, the healing of memory and the healing of the future. She makes performance art about these processes of architecture, about the reconstruction of a place, imbued with love for the ruins, and is an activist in defence of the rural environment, the forest, the springs, the rivers, animals, organic agriculture, and other traditions.

Erica Castanheira
Erica Castanheira graduated in Environmental Engineering from the Agriculture School of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, with a master’s in Energy and Environmental Management from the University of Aveiro, and a PhD in Sustainable Energy Systems.
from the University of Coimbra. She is the Vice-President of the Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra and a Guest Assistant Professor at the University of Coimbra. She develops research into the assessment of sustainability of the life cycle of products, of the carbon and water footprint of agrofood products and bioenergy. Of note is her co-creation work with the Department of Landscape Architecture – Harvard Graduate School of Design, which develops solutions to increase the resilience of the areas affected by the fires of 2017 in Arganil, adding value and promoting architecture as an artistic act but also as a vector of innovation.

**ALQUEVA RESERVOIR**

Pedrêz

Pedrêz was founded in 2020 in Porto by Matilde Cabral and Francisco Fonseca from the merger of the fashion development studio Fashion Office and the experimental architecture workshop Street, with works presented in institutions such as Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Columbia University, Royal Academy of Arts, 16th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia in 2018 and Istanbul Design Triennale (2020), among others. Pedrêz emerges as a workshop for applied research in the areas of systemic ecology and housing subsistence, with ongoing projects: Cúspides, designation for nomadic peri-urban off-grid units; Studere Satiea, a multidisciplinary studio for the study and development of constructions using cultivable materials; and Air-Water-Land Unit applied research on water self-sufficiency and territorial geoengineering.

**Aurora Carapinha**

Aurora Carapinha is a landscape architect, with a PhD in Landscape Arts and Techniques from the University of Évora, where she is assistant professor in the Department of Landscape, Environment and Planning. She is Director of the PhD course in Landscape Architecture at the University of Évora and researcher at the Centre for Art History and Artistic Research. Since 1996 she has been a guest lecturer of the Specialization Course in Conservation and Rehabilitation of Monuments and Historic Cities at the Federal University of Bahia, Brazil, and was a member of the Advisory Board of IPPAR. She demonstrates a great concern for and dedication to environmental issues, which she often deals with in collaboration with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

**IRRIGATION PERIMETER OF MIRA RIVER**

**Corpo Atelier**

Corpo is an architecture and art studio in the Algarve, founded in 2014 by Filipe Paixão. The studio bases its practice on the exploration and expansion of the elements of architectural anatomy through the practice of drawing and redesigning. The territorial condition of the Algarve geography strongly informs the studio’s project response, both in its built aspect and in the geographical aspect and the realities it provides, making use of invention and irony to subvert vernacular logics into contemporary attitudes. In 2020, it was awarded by Archdaily as one of the 20 best young practices and published Anatomias Possíveis, a book containing thoughts, images of drawings and models produced since the beginning of the studio.

**Eglantina Monteiro**

Eglantina Monteiro lives and works in Castro Marim and is an anthropologist and activist for environmental issues. She was Visiting Professor of Art Anthropology at the University of Algarve. In 2008 she co-founded Companhia das Culturas, a project developed around a hill in Barrocal Algarvio. She was cocurator of Memória da Amazônia – Expressões de Identidade e Afirmação Étnica (Manaus, 1997), an exhibition that generated a major debate about the returning of Amerindian objects previously held in museums, to the descendants of those who produced them. She curated O Retorno do Mundo – Memória e Vértige (Porto, 2017) an exhibition about the dryland orchard in Barrocal and Beira-Serra in the Algarve region, establishing connections among artists, scientists, or poets, reiterating the implications of different knowledge structures in the global transformations of the planet.

**LAGOA DAS SETE CIDADES**

Ilhéu Atelier

Ilhéu is a young architecture studio, based on the island of São Miguel, founded by Rita Sampio and Afonso Botelho Santos. The practice is based on a reflection of the place and overseas references, and translates into an architecture that celebrates colour, materials, and the narratives of its context. The ideas are explored and expressed with curiosity and enthusiasm, through a process of drawings, collages and models of different scales, that give rise to the investigation of the materials and spatial and formal possibilities of a contemporary architecture that intends to be the bearer of the memory and identity of the place.

**João Mora Porteiro**

João Mora Porteiro graduated in Geography and Regional Planning at the NOVA University of Lisbon and holds a PhD in Geography from the University of the Azores, where he has been a professor and researcher since 1996. His main areas of interest are territorial management in island areas, water resources management, climate change, nature conservation and regional geography, from an interdisciplinary perspective, with an emphasis on the transformative dynamics of Azorean landscapes. In addition to scientific research and university teaching activity, he has participated in several R&D projects and services, including more than 40 completed studies, supported by European, regional, and municipal funding. He is a member of the Research Centre in Biodiversity and Genetic Resources (CIBIO iMBio – Azores).

**Ponto Atelier**

Ponto Atelier was founded in 2016 by Ana Pedro Ferreira and Pedro Maria Ribeiro. Ponto Atelier’s work consists of a dynamic field of experimentation with projects and ideas based on the memory of the past and contemporary design. After winning the 1st prize in the Duas casas nas Ilhas Selvagens competition, they moved to Funchal and joined the City Office team. In 2021 they won the FAD award in the category of ephemeral installations with the INBETWEEN pavilion, Azores. Between 2014 and 2021 they were guest professors at the University of Évora, Blue and ISCTE, and tutors in the workshops W.A.V.E., IUA Venice and Summer School Moityrra (Azores). In 2022 they implemented the exhibition The Young New curated by André Tavares, in Garagem Sul. Recently, in collaboration with CLAB Architettura and Angelo Renna, they won the international public competition Corso Libertà – Freiheitsstrasse (Merano, Italy).

**Ana Salgueiro**

Ana Salgueiro is a PhD candidate in Cultural Studies at the Catholic University of Portugal, she has a master’s degree in African Lusophone Literature and graduated in LLM Portuguese Studies at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Lisbon. She is an integrated researcher at the CECUC (Lisbon) and collaborator at the CERAV and UMA-CIELR (Funchal). She is co-author and coordinator of the Journal TRANSLOCAL-Local and Urban Contemporary Cultures, and her work has been mainly concerned with the cultural systems of Lusophone Macaronesia, addressing issues such as: exile and human, cultural and textual mobility; the connections between culture and power; the relationships between cultural, imaginary and natural phenomena; and the role of artistic and academic discourse in contemporary societies.

**MADEIRA STREAMS**

**EgloFreiheitsstrasse**

**Universty of Coimbra**

**Pedro Maria Ribeiro**

**ILHÉU ATELIER**

**PONTO ATELIER**

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**MADEIRA STREAMS**
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Fertile Futures
Pavilion of Portugal

18th International Architecture Exhibition
La Biennale di Venezia 2023

HEAD CURATOR
Andreia Garcia

DEPUTY CURATORS
Ana Neiva
Diogo Aguiar

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Space Transcribers
Álvaro Domingues

INTERNATIONAL DOURO
Dulcineia Santos Studio
João Pedro Matos Fernandes

MIDDLE TEJO
Guida Marques
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