The Problematic of "Partnerships" and Funding for Immigrant Women's Communities:[1] Exploring Governmentality

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks at community-state relations and the ways in which state funding and community-state partnerships regulate immigrant women's communities. In order to better understand this relationship, the author employs Foucault's concept of governmentality and governing technologies and studies the impact on immigrant women's community organizing.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article étudie les relations communauté-état et les façons dont le financement par l'état et les partenariats communauté-état règlent les communautés d'immigrantes. Afin de mieux comprendre cette relation, l'auteure emploie le concept de gouvernementalité des technologies gouvernantes de Foucault, et étudie son impact sur l'organisation de communautés d'immigrantes.

A POINT OF DEPARTURE

In 1989, I became involved in a project at the university where I studied which involved creating an anti-racist academic programme of study. The first of its kind in Canada, the programme was conceptualized as a certificate which sought to integrate issues of racism, class and gender throughout its curriculum. With the aid of a one-time state grant, the coordinators of the programme were able to organize and promote the certificate as a new initiative in anti-racist pedagogical and community practices.[2] The faculty members involved in the certificate programme defined community-academic relations as a key and central focus in outlining the scope of the certificate. Since the coordinators were themselves active in shaping community-academic relations through various shared projects with neighbouring communities, continuing to build bridges with other cultural and political communities was an important objective. The basis for continued community involvement was to establish and maintain credible relations with communities, activists, cultural workers and volunteers in the Metro Toronto Area.

I was hired as the community liaison/coordinator, as a result of state funding, and worked on the project for two-and-a-half years. It was during my tenure with the programme that several issues came to light regarding the tensions involved in community-state relations *vis à vis* two distinct processes: funding and community-state "partnerships." How the state produces, constructs and orchestrates partnerships through its funding of community-based groups, and the implications of these particular arrangements, became fundamental issues for me. Through the processes of funding and partnerships I began to see how communities are regulated and how, in the end, community workers, cultural workers, activists and the like actually do the work of the state.

I want to be clear that I see the certificate programme as a point of departure for my analysis of funding and partnerships. The certificate programme itself is not my object of study here, however it does provide me with key moments of observation which have enabled me to get a closer reading of the various integral issues at stake with regards to community-state relations. My experiences and observations are my guide into thinking about the dynamics of governing community.

PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING: A BRIEF CONTEXT

The popular usage of community-state partnerships seems to have had some staying power as a way of addressing specific relations and joint activities between the state and local organizations. Although the term has been around for some time, we began hearing more about community-state partnerships as part of local grassroots organizing from about the mid 1980s until the present time. Most notably, the idea of community-police partnerships, or "community policing" as it is known here in Canada, patterned on a British model of crime prevention, is closest to the framework of community-state partnerships (Crawford (1997).

The concept of partnership entered into my academic research through my interest in how funding worked at the community level. At the time, I was equally interested in investigating the state's funding of local organizing efforts, in particular, immigrant women's organizations. My research pointed out that the end results of state funding and partnership processes were quite similar, as a result of which, community organizations became highly formal organizations.

When my work with the certificate programme began, issues of community and state relations were very much in debate. Working with a range of community groups on specific issues of "race" and racism, I realized how many organizations are state funded. While these funds were very much needed, community workers were beginning to question the state-community relationship *vis à vis* funding and so-called community-state partnerships. These questions came about in response to several key moments in the history of organizing, and specifically community development, in local areas. For immigrant women in particular, a number of issues had arisen in terms of the state's intervention in their daily, ongoing activities and organizing efforts. It is this history that is interesting and that sets the stage for deconstructing how the state begins to manage and construct immigrant women for its own purposes. Linda Carty and Dionne Brand (1993) and Tania Das Gupta (1999) have been able to scope the interior politics of the struggles which have faced immigrant women organizers. Their work becomes infinitely important in trying to think through the multiple issues involved in the work of governmentality.

It is important to note that the past two decades have been a key time in anti-racism organizing. Much of the work of immigrant women took up anti-racism as a way to approach local grassroots work. This variety of anti-racism struggled with considerations of sexuality and class, as well as with racial oppression (Dua 1999). It moved away from a very watered down race relations phase of multiculturalism and began to develop a politic around culture and identity. Questions of difference and representation became a central focus. Local communities to provincial branches of government, like the now defunct Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat, adopted, in one form or another, a model of anti-racism as a way to think through the complex relations of racism locally and nationally.

A number of questions which involved the ongoing tensions between community-state relations have ranged from how communities could conceivably be "in and against" the state to what oppositional forms community practices might take. The question I have been thinking about centres on how the state regulates as a function of its managing various community organizations. At one point, much discussion was focussed on issues of funding and the effects of "defunding" on the future of local and grassroots organizing. Funding has been a focal point of debate as a result of the province of Ontario's Conservative government's severe cutbacks to women's organizations, small presses, cultural and arts programming and so forth. For me, a key moment in this debate came together with the edited collection by Roxana Ng, Gillian Walker and Jacob Muller (1990) entitled, *Community Organization and the Canadian State.* With this collection, the state and community were conceptualized in relation to race, racism, sexuality, gender, environment, voluntarism and so on.

Linda Christiansen-Ruffman's (1990) essay has taken up the issue of state-sponsored participation by looking at community-state

partnerships and lends fascinating insights into this particular dynamic. Christiansen-Ruffman argues that while state-sponsored participation should invite a cooperative and somewhat trusting relationship between the Canadian state and various communities, the reality is vastly different. "Partnership" is, if you like, a code word for unequal relations. It is a one way strategy where one half of the partnership is disadvantaged. Christiansen-Ruffman maintains that the government-community partnership is "clearly not balanced in terms of the contributions of the two partners" (96). She further argues that inequality of resources actually contradicts the idea of a workable partnership. In the study which Christiansen-Ruffman discusses, she suggests that this inequality determines the "interactions between government officials and members of the community" which could lead to communities having "no basis to counteract the power of the bureaucratic structure" (96). Her study shows that while community-state partnerships have been around for some time, the mechanisms of state control and the lack of autonomy experienced by communities is the one steady resulting dynamic of these partnerships.

GOVERNMENTALITY: "THE CONDUCT OF CONDUCT"

Through an analysis of the formidable governmentality literature, I want to show how the tactics of governing either the individual, the group, or community becomes a way of guiding the conduct of others. Governmentality, originating with Michel Foucault, should not be read only in relation to the state. Governmentality is a process of managing and administering a population or a segment of that population, the end result of which is a self-regulating behaviour or what Foucauldians would call "the conduct of conduct." While the state does regulate our everyday behaviours, it is important to note that churches, schools, financial institutions, medical establishments, families, law enforcement agencies, and so on, do so also. Through these various institutions, particular strategies are used as a way of changing the way people approach their everyday functions. These strategies are often effective and encourage people to adopt different behavioural measures producing new patterns of social interaction which create particular forms of control and regulation (Crawford 1997). How one begins to regulate one's own pattern of behaviour due to external conditions, such as funding for organizations, is a question in the governmentality literature.

Governments understand that individuals are not merely subjects of power but are implicated in government operations (Rose and Miller 1992, 174). So part of the formidable force of governmentality is the finite exercise and constitution of power embedded within various local and extra local authorities who endeavour to manage and administer the conduct of others "in desired directions by acting upon their will, their circumstances or their environment" (1992, 175). And this is a key point; how "we" conduct ourselves is really a self-regulatory behaviour which has been shaped in some form by others, for example, psychiatrists. The question for Rose and Miller is not "one of accounting for government in terms of 'the power of the State,' but of ascertaining how, and to what extent, the state is articulated into the activity of government" (177).

An important feature of governmentality is the way governmental "technologies" work. Conducting the conduct of others is based on a matrix of technologies, strategies, arrangements and processes which are articulated into the everyday in order to shape certain effects. These governmental technologies include, but are not limited to, textual activities of ruling through forms, documents, rationales, calculations and so on. Such technologies coordinate, order, monitor and organize social relations of ruling in very particular ways. Processes of regulating behaviour are built into these texts. The term "technologies" is used to "suggest a particular approach to the analysis of the activity of ruling" (Miller and Rose 1990, 8). To understand modern forms of ruling it is important to investigate the most unambitious schemes which make governing seem unassuming. Such techniques allow for governing at a distance - a most insidious form of containment and behaviour regulation.

AN ANALYSIS OF GOVERNMENTALITY FOR IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S COMMUNITIES

In the literature which focuses on immigrant women in Canada, much writing has been devoted to understanding and clarifying the needs of immigrant women. Communities of immigrant women organizers have addressed needs in such areas as English As a Second Language (ESL) training, employment, job skills, recreation, domestic work, immigration and settlement, education, violence, health and much more. State funding has allowed immigrant women's organizations to continue to provide services. At times, gaps in service provision in mainstream institutions make community based organizations a necessity. Yet while state funding enables these opportunities, I am weary of the fact that communities of service providers, immigrant women and others, in the end, perform the work of the state, or as Susan Held (1990, 148) has said, "how the 'state' accomplishes its work through us." With this in mind it is important to be aware of the ways in which communities, immigrant women's and others, are regulated and monitored such that their patterns of organizing are changed significantly due to the imperatives of funding and partnerships. The issues I raise here are meant to serve as warnings of the pitfalls communities may experience when entering into relations with the state.

Roxana Ng's seminal work, *The Politics of Community Services: Immigrant Women, Class and State* (1988), demonstrates how state funding has been able to initiate several critical moments of disruption in the activities of a community employment agency for immigrant women. I want to use this example to outline several key processes in funding which demonstrate the regulative force of governing. First, the agency was reorganized from an egalitarian workplace to a hierarchical structure. Such a process saw a marked division between staff and volunteers due to shifts in the employment agency's mandate, record keeping, accounting, an increase in paper work and reporting. Ng argues that, "the change in the structural locations of individuals within the employment agency was accomplished by changes in their *perspectives*," such that members of the organization came to share the view of the state, thus becoming "internal representatives of the state." These workers were the ones carrying out the activities of ruling (89). The reorganization of the agency changed and undermined its grassroots advocacy position so as to accomplish the work of the state. Such professionalization and bureaucratization also affected the agency's relationship to immigrant women in that a formal counsellor-client relationship was established.

The process of change which the agency underwent as a result of the funding initiative consequently changed the way the organization approached the work of service provision. The changes were in fact set out in the funding criteria such that in order to receive further funding the agency needed to change particular modes of past conduct. The shift from grassroots to bureaucracy began to regulate not only how the work of the agency would be accomplished but the very way in which workers carried out their tasks. Immigrant women who used the agency for placement in the job market, in the end, were monitored through counsellors at the agency through documentation activity; counsellors were mandated to keep files on each client, each immigrant woman's success or failure.

Linda Carty and Dionne Brand (1993) have argued that bureaucratization of an organization disrupts the work of the organization and does not take into account the class character of such a process. Carty and Brand maintain that because of bureaucracy, staff time is "spent fulfilling the requirements set by the bureaucracies. These are requirements which do not take concerns of class, the *raison d'etre* of these organizations, into consideration. This bureaucratization adds to the staff's already heavy workload meeting the dire needs of the groups' clientele" (173).

Documents, statistics, and records of immigrant women are all part of how government builds and collects information on the population it regulates and/or monitors. Knowledge of a community provides the means for acting upon that

community and shaping the movements of that community. In Roxana Ng's study (1988), she contends that this knowledge base was stored in the form of records and statistics which determined the possibility for future funding. Ng argues: "[i]t was only in negotiation with Outreach for a new contract and when Outreach began to require more and more written information to make funding decisions that some members realized the importance of documents in displaying the agency's performance and providing for a measurement of its accountability and effectiveness" (90).

One particular feature of documentation is the way it articulates the work of ruling and therefore of power. Ng states:

> ...texts and documents have become the general mode of ruling in advanced capitalist societies. Thus, it is impossible to understand the relation between state (ruling) processes and community struggles without understanding how documents work in mediating, enforcing and transforming everyday life. This is an essential part of how community struggles become an extension of ruling in our society. (1988, 91)

Documents not only regulate us, they draw us into the state apparatus as workers for the state. Community workers, by carrying out the work detailed in funding mandates, which in many cases is not the work of the organization, carry out the work of the state and in so doing become representatives of the state at the community level.

Community groups, organizations, agencies and centres enter into relations of ruling with the state through what I am calling "techniques of inscription." Inscription, argue Rose and Miller (1992, 185), "renders reality into a calculable form" and can be described as a device for monitoring and gathering information for centres of ruling where such information is utilized as data - through certain calculations - about a governable body, group or community. Inscriptions take many forms: the written report, drawings (flow charts and graphs), minutes, numbers (statistics), mailing lists, contact numbers, addresses, journals and so forth. Rose and Miller argue that by means of inscription:

> reality is made stable, mobile, comparable. It is rendered in a form in which it can be debated and diagnosed. Information in this sense is not the outcome of a neutral recording function. It is itself a way of acting upon the real, a way of devising techniques for inscribing it in such a way as to make the domain in question susceptible to evaluation, calculation and intervention. (1992, 185)

What Rose and Miller show here is precisely how, by utilizing forms and documents, a community agency catering to the employment needs of local immigrant women can be denied or granted funding. If reality is "comparable," then, in the case of the employment agency, it could be compared against another agency or another community group for the purpose of evaluating its performance and service delivery.

When I worked as the Community Liaison/Coordinator for the anti-racist certificate programme, I was able to see first hand how the techniques of inscription operate. The programme was monitored through two very specific inscription tasks. One form of inscription was the "year end report" which I submitted to the certificate team and which was then subsequently forwarded to the Secretary of State. The second means of inscription was in the form of smaller reports which the team coordinator authored and sent to Secretary of State. Since the programme was to receive two lump sum grant payments, these smaller reports detailed the progress of the programme and the team's visions for the future of the certificate. The Department of Secretary of State operated as the "centre" through which knowledge of the programme, based on what we sketched out in our reports, was gathered. In the year end report which I wrote, I was asked to document and detail every function, event, interview and meeting that I had attended. This request involved naming activists, organizations, dates and contact people. While I was unsure how

this information would be used and by whom, I did understand that information was being accumulated. Although I thought about resisting this process, I also wanted to see the success of this anti-racism programme. Without a community liaison/coordinator, the certificate team would be pressed to do much of the promotional work themselves. Since most team members were on faculty, the work of the community coordinator would probably fall squarely on the shoulders of either one member of the team or the departmental secretary. At the time, the secretary was visibly and centrally involved in the programme attending to administrative duties.

The year end report was an interesting engagement for me. Part of the goal of the certificate programme was to build bridges between the academic community where the programme was housed and those communities outside the campus. My frustrations with documenting these communities in a report left me feeling unethical and untrustworthy. Speaking to community workers and promoting the certificate programme was what I was hired to do. However, the politics of community work and organizing, whether cultural or political, is premised on the honesty of the process, not only the willingness of activists and volunteers to do the difficult work that is involved. Blurring the details in my report with the promotional work involved in the coordinator's position seemed somewhat unappreciative of the real tensions, struggles and, indeed, history of community-state relations; those, for example, documented in Ng, Muller and Walker (1990).

For immigrant and visible minority women, state funding and partnerships have left community workers tentative and suspicious of state representatives and state processes. Added to these suspicions has been the professionalization of activists and cultural workers as they have become incorporated into the state as bureaucrats. During the early 1980s, resistance against state-sponsored community initiatives came to a grinding halt. When several state-sponsored conferences led to divisions within the immigrant and visible minority women's communities, several analyses (Carty and Brand 1993; Das Gupta 1999) arose that showed the containing and controlling aspect of the state. The state was able to divide these groups of women very strategically, diverting attention away from its own processes of ruling.

In Tania Das Gupta's (1986) *Learning From Our History: Community Development by Immigrant Women in Ontario 1958-1986* we are given a very detailed genealogy of the organizing histories of local immigrant women. As noted in the title, the work and organizing efforts of immigrant women has been an ongoing process since the late 1950s. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, issues of rights and difference which concerned employment, education (ESL in particular), language rights, pay equity and racism, defined the focus of most organizing groups. Other interests such as child care and women's health rights were also central organizing issues. Communities not only worked on these issues locally but provincially and, as resources would allow, nationally. The state, however, decided to step in, by way of containing and managing the organizing efforts of immigrant women, since the analysis from these groups pointed to the fact that the state participated in the oppression and discrimination against visible minority and immigrant women (Carty and Brand 1993).

The state was able to accomplish the division amongst women by creating one large and central women's group and then charging them with the enormous task of addressing all the issues which plagued all immigrant and visible minority women's communities. Such a large task, of course, would leave this group with internal struggles and the state looking like it saved the day (Carty and Brand 1993). While the state initially supported the conferences which created these community divisions, no follow-up resources were forthcoming. Through their analysis, Carty and Brand suggest that:

> ...this could result in the newly formed organization ultimately competing with all the other representative women's organizations for the small pool of state funds. Perhaps more important, the Coalition spent the first year working on

> its constitution. This meant that the very much needed resourcefulness of the women involved was being refocused away from their groups, and onto drafting the constitution for this state-formed organization. (1993, 177)

The capacity of the state to construct such demarcated lines, pitting one women's group against the other, especially in terms of funding, shows how ever present "divide and conquer" tactics remain.

So far, I have discussed issues pertaining to the state of funding for immigrant women's organizations. I have argued that funding, which has facilitated and organized the link between community and state, is a particular type of "technology" for governing the conduct of others. As a technology of governing, it has also invented so-called partnerships between the state and the community. Partnerships strategically build a working relation between community and state which is based on the idea of sharing information. However, in reality, partnerships often run contrary to community practices because they involve unequal relations consisting of unequal time commitments, resources and energies. Most importantly though, partnerships disable, disrupt, disorganize and monitor community activities through particular methods of control. In the end, communities get shafted while the state shifts attention away from its methods and practices of ruling.

A particular aspect of community-state partnerships is the placement of state representatives on the board or on the executive committee of organizing groups. While a partnership is struck on the basis of funding, how that money is spent is in part dictated by the objectives of the state. Representatives of the state are able to monitor the spending of funds supplied by the state and the activities of community workers they work with. This kind of monitoring and control of immigrant women has led some community groups to remove state representatives from their board. Tania Das Gupta discusses such a move in respect to the historical treatment of immigrant women's communities (1999, 200). The other notorious aspect of having state representatives on community boards is their control of community mandates. State representatives carry out the work of the state on community boards in these ways.

Partnerships are rooted in the power dynamics between state and community which assume communities to be willingly compliant due to the need for funding. Such a position, I believe, aims to blunt the "radical" organizing possibilities and activities of these communities. Compliant suggests pliable or easily reined in, a view I find difficult to comprehend if we are discussing local communities such as immigrant women. The history of struggle and protest around pervasive discriminatory issues like equity rights, abortion, and racism, marks immigrant women's organizing as anything but pliable. Instead it highlights the contradictory location of the state as a site for resolving issues which it indeed intends to contain. It shows a lack of responsibility for certain constituents and a disingenuous response to these members through its governing tactics. Technologies such as partnerships depoliticize and hinder the work of communities.

In his research on state sponsored partnerships, Jean Panet-Raymond (1987) has argued that to carry out any form of "radical" grassroots organizing, community organizations must make the choice between subsidized partnerships or underfunded (or non-funded, volunteer) local action. Panet-Raymond discovered that private funders, such as philanthropic organizations, are forcing groups to register as "charitable organizations" where the Ministry of Revenue's stricter guidelines forbid any "political" work (1987, 283). Such a move by this centre of regulation begs the question: what is the Ministry of Revenue's definition of "political." The registration of any organizing group for the purpose of ensuring funding is yet another measure of the intricacies involved in regulating conduct. Clearly, "registration" becomes another code in the production of knowledge integral to ruling activities.

CONCLUSIONARY THOUGHTS: RESISTANCE STRATEGIES

I want to suggest some alternative means of funding community initiatives which can, in fact, be applicable to many other organizations, not only immigrant women's organizations. These alternatives, while important factors for sustaining vital services, show that the politics of funding are complex but necessary.

It is difficult to think that citizenry participation can in fact transform the state. In the face of Ontario Premier Mike Harris' funding cutbacks to most social services and so-called "special interest" groups, there is an intense battle to reclaim the hard won victories which initially enabled community organizations to perform the work that they do. Christiansen-Ruffman (1990) has argued that participation in state-sponsored initiatives in fact transforms the state. However, I am hard pressed to conclude that the state becomes transformed. To follow the logic of the governmentality literature, what happens at the level of community-state arrangements results, ultimately, in some form of community regulation, not state transformation. The state's lack of leadership on issues of community service provision demonstrates the impossibility for any sort of centralized, bureaucratic, well-oiled ruling apparatus, to even begin to address the diversity and complexity of service and organizing efforts. Conservative cuts hurt not only the disenfranchised, they also prevent the possibility for transformation.

In order to think about how one can resist the state's ways of conducting lives and the ways of working in community, then one must devise strategies which will resist reliance on the state. This could mean a certain degree of autonomy and latitude from the ways in which community organizations are scrutinized and governed. There are various ways to accomplish such goals. I return to Tania Das Gupta's words in *Learning From Our History* (1986) to argue for alternative means of funding through "diversification" and "sharing." While the state is one "common" place to start, by diversifying their funding sources, organizations could contact community churches, labour and women's organizations and local foundations. Meanwhile, there are sister organizations and other local community groups which, through coordination of certain projects, interdependence and sharing, can aid in funding. Learning from the experiences of others is a valuable tool for community workers, says Das Gupta (45).

Through my work with the certificate programme, I was able to attend a number of conferences. There is a great deal of organizing going on at conferences. Members meet each other and share strategies for resisting and devising alternative means for financial assistance. I have often informed local community members about conferences which I attend on behalf of the certificate programme and then share information from the conference with them. This sharing has helped my work with community groups. Since my position as community coordinator was paid through the state grant, I felt that volunteering information and my time were two concrete ways to maintain credible relations with community groups while engaged in community development.

When the department which housed the certificate programme began hiring, one candidate who was an experienced local community activist brought particular strategies to the programme which helped us further engage in community development. One of the often-asked questions about the programme was how we were funded and while I was honest about our source of funding, it was, in many cases, seen as money which had been divested from community groups. Working against such criticism and in conjunction with new faculty in the programme, we were able to set a course of action spelling out carefully how state funds would be used in order to benefit the community. This exchange further enhanced the programme as students in the programme gained a great wealth of knowledge and information for their own work and organizations. One positive way in which we diverted funds into the community was by sharing our resources as well as skills. Utilizing state funds, we were able to invite guest speakers to the programme to give seminars and workshops providing them with substantial honoraria for their time and work. Sharing our skills led us to

volunteer a great deal of our time to work on community projects such as the 1993 Dub Poetry Festival International. Methodologically and ideologically, we understood funding differently and with a renewed sense of purpose.

While sharing resources may seem like a small effort, in the larger picture of cutbacks, "defunded" programmes and loss of funds altogether, small efforts go a long way to keep organizations running. With the Harris government's "common sense" slash and burn approach to funding local groups in the province of Ontario, philanthropic organizations/individuals have been sought after as viable solutions to present funding crises. It is with caution, though, that community activists and organizations engage with such funders. I am tentative about philanthropic organizations simply because they may operate with the same management and monitoring methods as the state. There is a fine line that delineates the moral and economic regulatory methods of the state and those of philanthropists.

M. Valverde's work (1991, 166; 1995) illustrates that moral regulation is not simply the province of philanthropy nor are coercion and scientific knowledge those of the state. Valverde argues that "the distinctions between the state and civil society is a flexible one and is articulated differently at the level of rhetoric, at the level of administrative practice, and at the level of peoples' experience" (1991, 196). Additionally, different modes of regulation are constantly in production, an effect of actors located inside and outside of the state (1991, 166). Moral, economic and political forms of regulation are all specific to the project of ruling in liberal democracies.

ENDNOTES

1. In this paper, when I use "immigrant women" and "community," I mean to argue for their socially constructed character. As categories for analysis, they are understood politically, as complexly not essentially organized. I respectfully suggest that to claim any "common" identity such as immigrant women comes dangerously close to essentializing this category. The context through which categories like immigrant women have been fought for and won are, I believe, political sites and so the category is a performed identity. I do not use this category here to mean any similarity or singularity of essence with respect to issues of identity, representation or difference.

The idea of community has long been a part of my studies. I try in this paper, as much as I can, to pluralize community to indicate its multiplicitous make-up. In my dissertation work, I take up the idea of community to understand it politically.

2. The certificate programme is an academic programme set in a university department. Apart from the one-time project grant received from the Secretary of State at the initial stage, the certificate programme has received no other funding to date.

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