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The Infinite Loop – Science and Democracy

Exploring innovative policy making

Bangalore International Center / Swissnex Bangalore / Swiss Consulate / Bangalore, India

17.02.2023

Setting the scene – science and politics during the Covid-Pandemic

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Renommierter Experte und Bundesrats-Kritiker tritt aus Corona-Taskforce zurück

Der Schweizer Epidemiologe Christian Althaus war Mitautor einer der ersten Studien zum Coronavirus aus China. Jetzt verlässt er die Covid-Taskforce des Bundes. Auch aus Protest.

As India's Lethal Covid Wave Neared, Politics Overrode Science

The country's top science agency tailored its findings to fit Prime Minister Narendra Modi's optimistic narrative despite a looming crisis, researchers say.

Science

India needs barrier between science & politics, says chemistry Nobel co-winner V Ramakrishnan

The scientist pointed out that wealth of a country depended on innovation and knowledge, and noted that over the years, the share of GDP India spent on science had been declining.

MOHANA BASU 5 February, 2023 02:22 pm IST

Drosten spricht über Rücktritt

Bund fordert von Corona-Rat "Herkules-Aufgabe"

03.05.2022, 16:12 Uhr

Other exampels:

- Digital Health!
- Cyber Security!
- Climate change!

Questions:

- Misunderstandings?
- Missing mutual interest?
- Lack of experience in cooperating?
- How to move foreword?

My background – environmental sciences and urban planning…

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Strategic Governance

President COSt, UNIGE

VP Board of the ETH-Domain

Board of TU Dresden, TU Graz

President CoF GICHD

Board ICMP

Politics

Member of the national Parliament of Switzerland 1991-2007

Consulting and Evaluation

Stakeholder management for a PH

Strategic support for a PH

Evaluation Space Policies CH, 2022

Start-up training Innosuisse, 2022

Electronic patient document, 2022

Supporting the Delegate on digital transformation of the Federal Administration

Business plan for a music center, 2021

Audit of tech-transfer SICHH, 2020

Research and Teaching

Innovating public policies and management

Impact oriented subsidies for environmental policies

Participatory processes mainly in urban planning

How to construct the infinite loop

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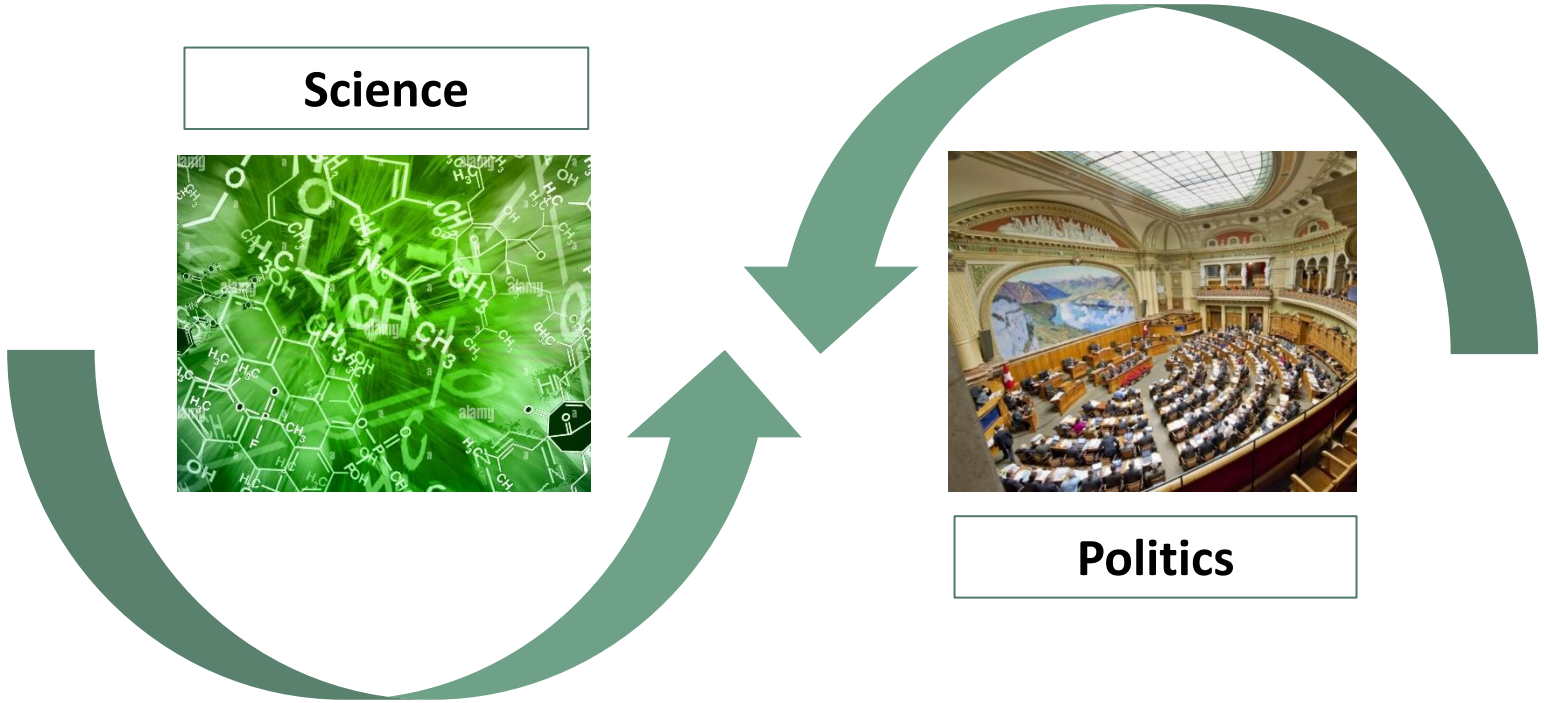

- How to work success-fully accross the inter-face of science and politics?
- How to explore inno-vative policy making?
- How to add value to both systems?

Science – searching for truth but facing contradictory expectations

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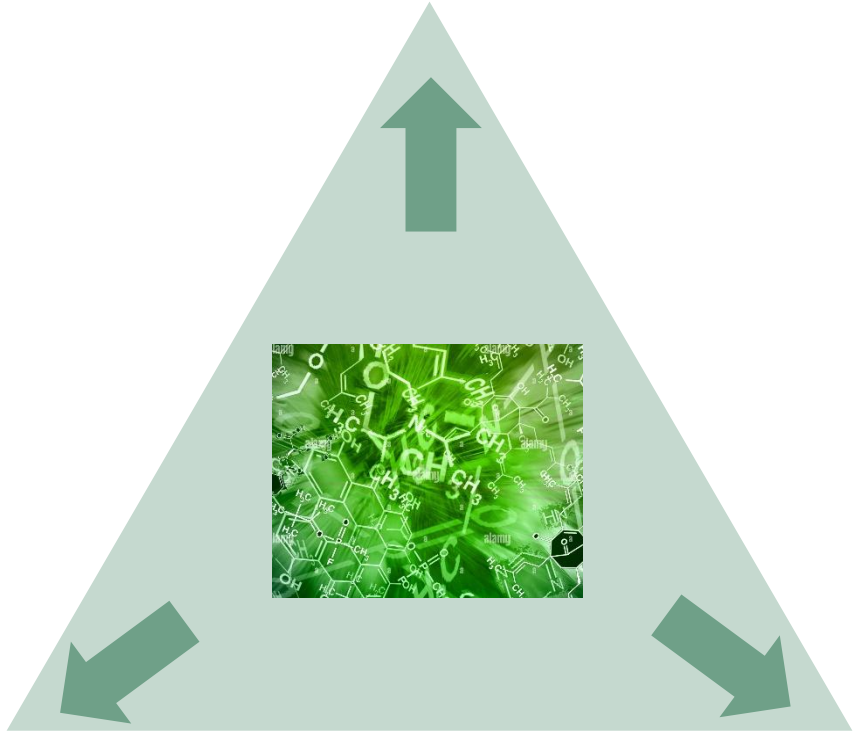
Science has a threefold mission:

- **Seeking for insight** with an intrinsic motivation in the spirit of the Enlightenment and to pass on new knowledge (fundamental, blue-sky science);
- **Contributing to solutions** for real world problems and acting in favor of society, economy and the environment (applied science and development);
- **Reflecting** on societal developments from some distance and sometimes also with a critical positioning.

Only by transforming the inherent contradictions of these missions into synergies science adds its specific value to the world.



Politics – a task of societal optimisation

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Politics is not about the truth but about solutions.

- **Solutions:** Politics must find solutions for societal, economic and environmental challenges and general public concerns.
- **Acceptable:** Policies must be capable of winning majorities – be it in parliament or even in a referendum.
- **Boundaries:** Political decisions must consider legal frame-work conditions or create new law. They must respect budget targets and use taxpayers' money responsibly.

Accentuated change and ever faster developing global crises, urge politics to deliver solutions that can be implemented more and more quickly.

Different logics, interests and incentives

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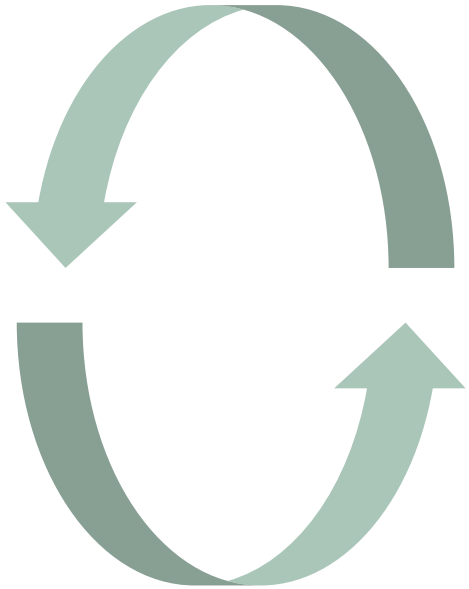
Aspects	Science	Politics
Logic within the system	• Search for **insight** • Transfer of knowledge • **Competition** of ideas	• Search for **solutions** • Societal optimisation • **Ideologies**
Reference systems	• **Long** term • **Global**	• **Short-**, mid-, long-term • Local, **national**, global
Interests and incentives	• Intrinsic motivation • **Scientific competition** • Academic career • Economic interests	• Intrinsic motivation • Political career, **elections** • Responsibility regarding the electorate
Moreover…	• Male dominated in many disciplines • Benchmarks reflecting old traditions	• Strongly depending on visibility of induvial politi-cians via media



Lesson learnt 1: Two partners with a lot of misunderstanding

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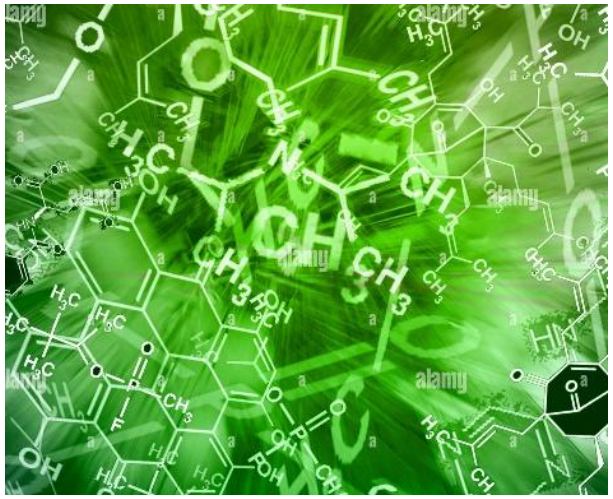
Truth



Solutions

- Science and politics – two systems with completly different logics!
- And with a lot of mis-understanding and misinterpretation at the interface!

Constructing the infinite loop embracing science and politics needs innovative governance instruments!

Lesson learnt 2: Acknowledging differences, translating and building bridges

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Science and politics follow different logics:

- Different goals, objectives and tasks
- Different systemic requirements
- Different reference systems
- Different incentives

At the same time, both, scientists and politicians are experts – in their specific system!

Differences and the specific expertise must be mutually recognized, if we want to be successful in working across the interface of science and politics.

- Working at the interface of science and politics means constantly translating and building bridges – with two-way systems!

Lesson learnt 3: Science for politics ….

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In democracies policies have high needs of legitimation.

- **Evidence:** Political decisions must be evidence-based.
- **Dialogue:** There is need for a constant dialogue of politics and science, that must be structured to be sustainable. India and the UK have built up an interesting system under a Chief Scientific Advisor who reports directly to the PM.
- **Civil society:** Informing and educating civil society is important. Thereby, media is crucial in communicating scientific findings to a wider public – real facts instead of alternative facts.

More than ever, politics depends on science and on its contributions to solving societal challenges.

- The covid-pandemic underlined the importance of a constant dialogue of science and politics!
- Both sides first had to get to know each other, to acknowledge the logic of each other and to respect the specific responsibilities of the two systems and their actors.

Lesson learnt 4: …. politics for science

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The dialogue of science and politics has the potential to add value to both systems.

- **Framework conditions:** Politics must assure stable framework conditions for science, including stable finances avoiding stop and go policies.
- **Autonomy:** Politics must guarantee the autonomy of academic institutions. Autonomy is pivotal when it comes to assuring the fundamental freedom of research and teaching.
- **Real world:** Working with society, science can grasp real world problems and turn them into interesting research questions.

Science depends on a strong public commitment. Private funding is important but will not assure long term research.

- Both systems need respect and autonomy; but there should be no barrier!
- Independent strategy boards of academic institutions must take on the task of mutual translation.
- Universities must teach and support researchers in communicating with a broader public.

Lesson learnt 5: Public administrations are important intermediary

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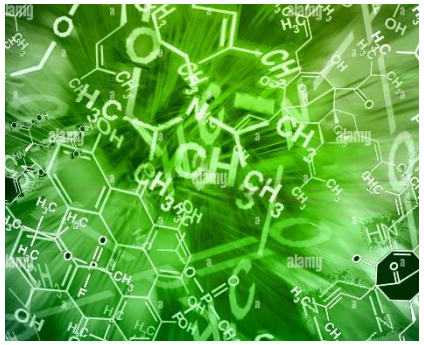
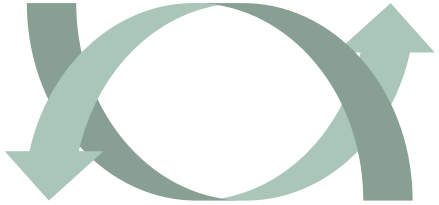
Science





Public Administration

Politics

- Public administrations have broad competences.
- They have scientific, process-related as well as political knowledge.
- The middle-management of public administrations integrates thematic and political competences.
- They serve as institutional memories for short-term oriented politics.

The innovation potential of public administrations must be activated – to serve both science and politics!

Looking beyond – adding the economy as well as art to the equation

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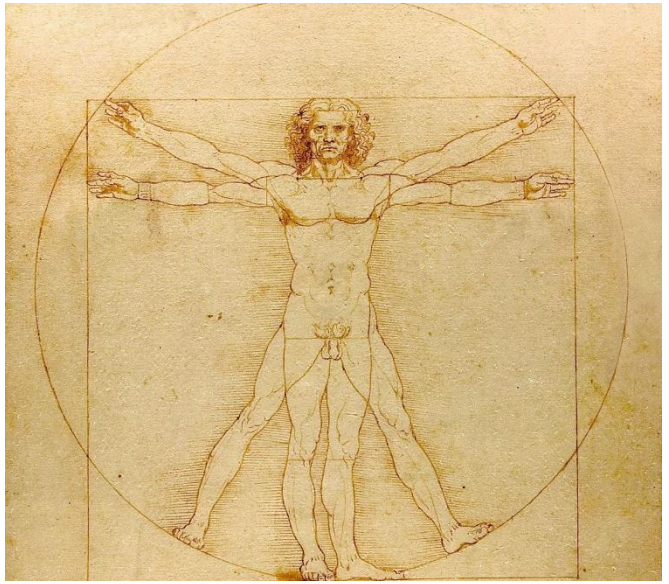
Adding the economic sector as well as art to the equation may strengthen innovation.

- **Science and economy:** In the last century, the nexus of science and industry has become increasingly important. Fostering innovation through science and technology is a strategic need for our economies in a globally competitive world.
- **Science and art** were linked ever since; ties only got weaker during the last centuries. Embracing the interaction of art and science may foster understanding and cooperation also of science, politics and the economy, since ultimately, they all work systematically but with a lot of intuition!

Science, art, politics and the economy – the infinite loop, jointly addressing challenges and supporting values!



Impressions from the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2023 on science, art and politics

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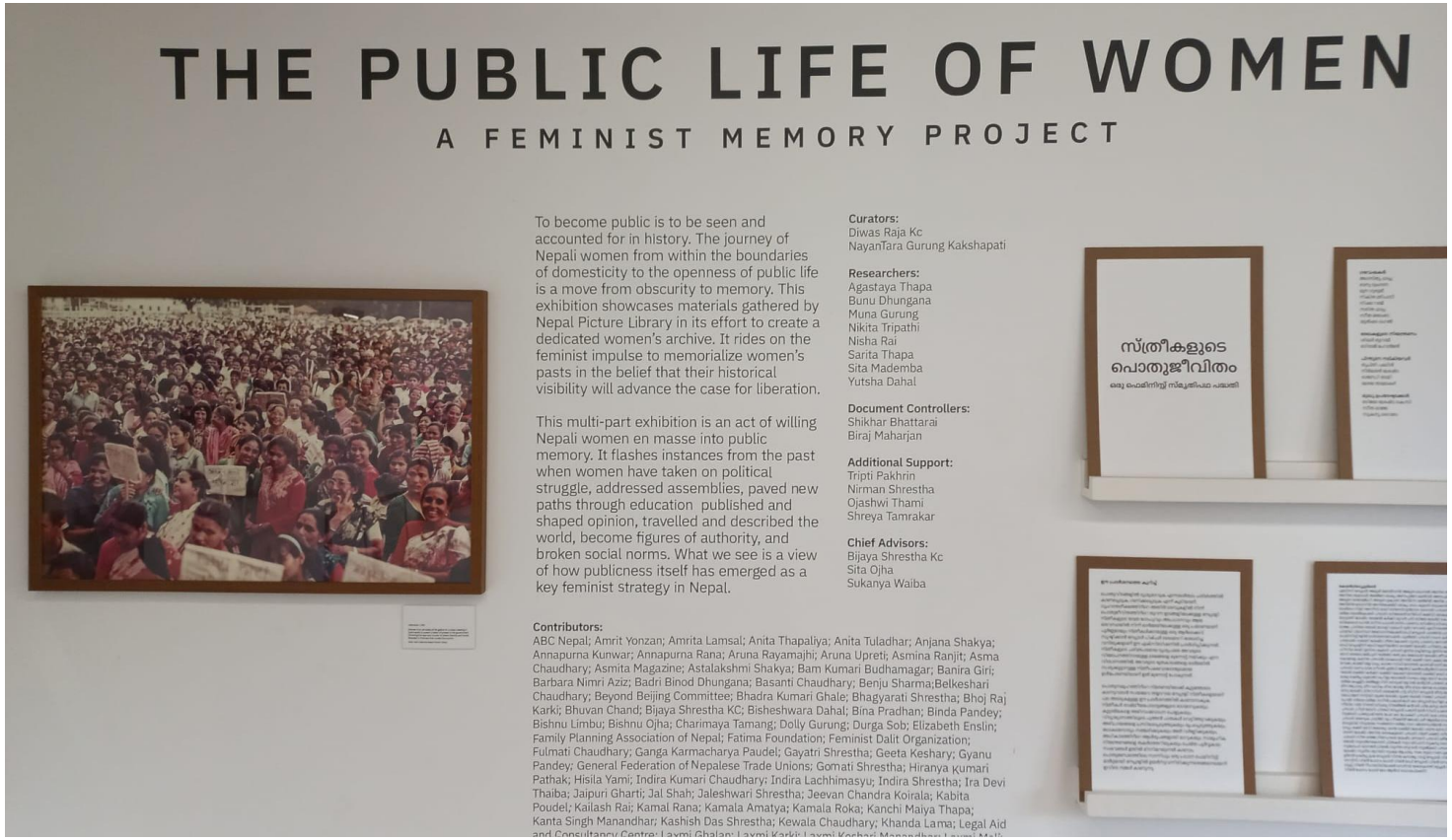

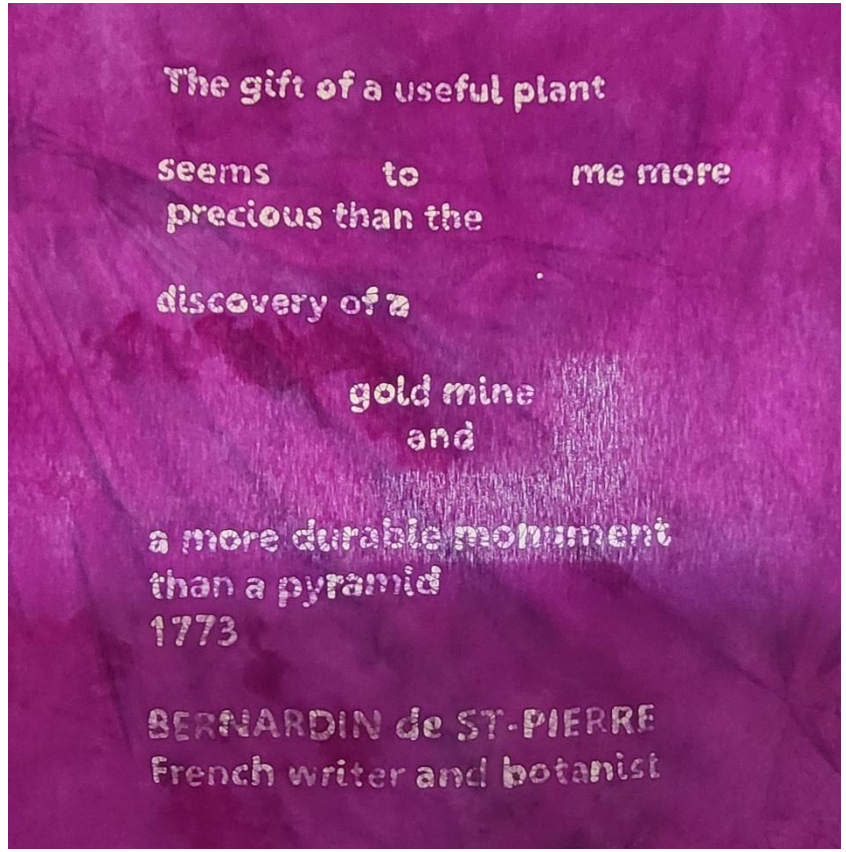

The infinite loop – exploring innovative policy making

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- Acknowledging the rational of the other side!
- Translating and building bridges!
- Maintaining a constant and structured dialogue!
- Building up a network of contact points in the administration under a chief scientific officer!
- Assuring stable framework conditions, funding as well as the autonomy of science!
- Introducing strategic boards as mediators!
- Supporting researchers to communicate with a broader public!
- Activating the innovative potential of public administrations!
- Adding art and the economy to the equation!

barbara
hæring

Impressum

Barbara Haering
+41 79 446 71 20
hello@barbara-haering.ch
barbara-haering.ch

Universitätsstrasse 9
CH-8006 Zürich

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