DREAMS REWIRED  
MOBILISIERUNG DER TRÄUME

A film by Manu Luksch, Martin Reinhart & Thomas Tode

– press folder –

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Short synopsis

*DREAMS REWIRED* traces the desires and anxieties of today’s hyper-connected world back more than a hundred years, when telephone, film and television were new. As revolutionary then as contemporary social media is today, early electric media sparked a fervent utopianism in the public imagination – promising total communication, the annihilation of distance, an end to war. But then, too, there were fears over the erosion of privacy, security, morality. Using rare (and often unseen) archival material from nearly 200 films to articulate the present, *DREAMS REWIRED* reveals a history of hopes to share, and betrayals to avoid.
Long synopsis

‘Every age thinks it’s the modern age…’

– but this one, a time of always-on connectivity, ubiquitous computing, and the acceleration of everything, really is new. No longer even modern, we are allegedly post-modern, post-industrial, and hurtling towards the post-human. With its profusion of desire and superabundance of information, our age couldn’t be more different…

*DREAMS REWIRED* offers another perspective. A montage of films from the 1880s to the 1930s, many rare and previously unscreened, it traces contemporary appetites and anxieties back to the birth of the telephone, television and cinema. Its claim: that the social convulsions of today’s hyper-mediated world were already prefigured over 100 years ago, during the electric media boom of the late 19th century. Early electric media were as revolutionary as social media are now. They sparked a fervent utopianism in the public imagination; promising total communication, the annihilation of distance, an end to war. The technologies were to serve everyone, not just the elites. Through strengthening human relationships, increasing efficiency, and predicting the future, it would become possible to build a new world for all to share.

But what these media initially promised, and what they eventually delivered was very different. The early radical openness was disciplined and regulated, and two-way, peer-to-peer communication gave way to hierarchical broadcasting. And the fears that had accompanied the hopes – fears of the erosion of privacy, of ubiquitous surveillance, of financial exposure and moral hazard – began to appear well-founded.

*DREAMS REWIRED* is an assemblage of clips from nearly 200 films, ranging from the earliest dramatic works to music hall slapstick, newsreels, marketing materials, recordings of scientific experiments, and artistic adventures with film as medium. Through years of research in archives around the world, the directors have unearthed material that is by turns hilarious, revelatory, aesthetically striking, and astonishingly prescient. This footage is spliced together with a commentary on our contemporary predicament (voiced by Tilda Swinton) that, rather than plunging the audience into the past, pulls the historical material into the present. By forging an identification between contemporary viewers and their idealistic peers from 100 years ago, *DREAMS REWIRED* suggests a path of positive action towards a 21st century conception of openness.
Directors' statement

Attempts to understand where we are, and where we might be going, appear feeble against the acceleration of our times. If it’s on the market, then it’s already obsolete. But ‘those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.’

*DREAMS REWIRED* is an essay film about technological utopias, a work that exposes the historical promises and processes in which current notions of progress are rooted. It deals poetically with our desires to connect to each other, and the way these desires were further spun out into fantasies. It is a political film, yielding new perspectives on pressing contemporary debates – on security, privacy, and rights in virtual space; recalling forgotten histories – especially the role of women; and reminding us of the limits to the inclusiveness of utopia – the historical relationship between technological development and colonialism is mirrored in the way we ‘externalize’ the production (and disposal) of hardware today. The information revolution progresses on the backs of cheap labor and precious minerals.

It was in the telephone exchanges that large numbers of women first entered the white-collar labour market. And from the first (actual) director of narrative films to the first (fictional) DJ depicted on screen, women assumed leading roles in shaping the realities and fantasies of the new electric age. *DREAMS REWIRED* restores to these pioneers to their original prominence.

Perhaps most provocatively, the film advances a new thesis that overturns the established precedence of cinema over television. The arrival of the telephone immediately triggered fantasies of communicating with live images over distance – what today we would call the videophone. Thus, before the birth of cinema, ‘moving images’ had already entered the public imagination as ‘tele-visual’ pictures. While tele-vision remained technically beyond grasp, early cinema provided a near-live substitute, carrying news, sports, and events. As different as cinema and the telephone were as technologies, turn-of-the-century visions understood them both as links in a chain of progress that drew the world more tightly together. It was cinema that dreamed of becoming television, aspiring to a place among the other ‘instantaneous’ electrical media.

Manu Luksch, Martin Reinhart, Thomas Tode – January 2015
Interview with Manu Luksch

In conversation with Gareth Evans, Adjunct Film Curator, Whitechapel Gallery London.

GE: What was the seed of this project?

ML: While preparing for the permanent exhibition medien.welten at the Technisches Museum Wien in 2002, Martin Reinhart discovered an undocumented set of shellac discs in the museum’s archive. They stemmed from the earliest synchronised film format, a sound-on-disc system from 1930. Inventory no. 31.167 turned out to be a sensational find – the discs were nothing less than the long lost soundtrack of one of the most seen, most discussed, most quoted films in cinema history: Eisenstein’s Battleship Potemkin.

It is evident from press, police records, censors’ documents and letters that it in large part the powerful and innovative work by composer Edmund Meisel that contributed to the film’s huge global success. This is how Thomas Tode came on board – as specialist in the histories of political film, he had researched and published about the many efforts at the time to ban and censor Battleship Potemkin outside the Soviet Union. Martin and Thomas began to look deeper into the history of audiovisual media – and into the world’s film archives. With some breathtaking film material and deep ideas at hand, AMOUR FOU Vienna embarked on the production together with Hamburg based BILDSCHÖN Filmproduktion and in collaboration with ZDF/ARTE. Two years ago, I came on board.

GE: You source footage entirely from the early decades of moving image, while building an argument through implication and association about the digital world we live in now. Do you feel there are solutions to the problems we face now in terms of paths not taken from earlier technological developments?

ML: In his book The Master Switch: The Rise and Fall of Information Empires (2010), Tim Wu presents an enlightening viewpoint on the history of information systems. He characterizes its movement as cyclic, with open structures become consolidated and closed over time, reopening only after disruptive innovation. The book outlines how network/media monopolies and governments make cosy bedfellows. Silvio Berlusconi and Thaksin Shinawatra, both media moguls turned prime ministers, are two of the more bizarre players to emerge from this nexus of expediency. In the recent Snowden
revelations, the same cyclical pattern arises – the compliance of major internet companies with the US state led to the elimination of dissident voices, who were dependent on the same infrastructure.

We require large numbers of citizens to come out of their ‘mobile phone comfort zones’ and affect change. The ultimate ambition of this film is to revitalise popular (and academic) debates about ubiquitous computing and media by providing the missing historical context – particularly, early electric utopias in the public imagination, and ongoing struggles for openness. Today, the media- and data landscape is ‘up for grabs’ – just as it was in the late 19th century. But if we don’t safeguard this landscape for the larger community, it will be grabbed and divided up just as entire continents once were.

**GE: Tilda Swinton's involvement builds on your earlier collaboration in FACELESS. Tell us about this choice of performer and your desires for the commentary's tone.**

**ML:** The voice-over script contains many styles of language, carries multiple threads of meaning, and is full of references, both historical and contemporary, popular and esoteric. The thesis is provocative, with interweaving lines of argument. No dates are mentioned, only a few historical individuals named, and often single ideas are illustrated through dozens of film clips. We needed a voice that could articulate conviction and doubt, that could speak equally with passion and disinterest, versatile enough to inhabit different on-screen characters, and with a quality of timelessness. It was vital to smoothly transport the viewer from past to present and beyond. By not situating the viewer-listener in a definite time, the work softens the barriers to imagining possible futures.

The script of FACELESS is similarly intricate and kaleidoscopic; Tilda's performance of it, haunting and visceral. She is truly protean; working to illuminate the deepest ideas of a text, improvising revisions, and drawing on an unparalleled diversity of experience. At some point in the development of this script, we realised that Tilda was the ideal voice (again), and from then on we wrote with her in mind.

Later, it turned out that she had an unexpected personal connection with the text – one her ancestors, Alistair Campell-Swinton, likely taught John Logie Baird during his studies in Scotland. (There’s a modest entry in Wikipedia about his early experiments with mechanical television!)
Crew

A film by Manu Luksch, Martin Reinhart, Thomas Tode

Narrated by Tilda Swinton

Narration written by Manu Luksch, Mukul Patel

Original music composed by Siegfried Friedrich

Editor Oliver Neumann

Animation Hanna Nordholt, Fritz Steingrobe

Sound design Mukul Patel, Pierre Brand

Production Managers Alfie Lang-Král, Martin Repka

Commissioning Editors Nina Goslar, Ingrid Gränz

Produced with the support of Österreichisches Filminstitut, Filmstandort Austria, Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein, Filmfonds Wien, Arts Council England

In collaboration with ZDF / arte / 3Sat

Co-producer Linda Matern

Producers Alexander Dumreicher-Ivanceanu, Bady Minck

Co-production BILDSCHÖN Filmproduktion AMBIENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Production AMOUR FOU Vienna

Technical data:

Documentary, Austria / Germany / UK, 2015, 85 min, DCP
Manu LUKSCH

Manu Luksch is an artist and filmmaker who interrogates conceptions of progress and scrutinises the effects of network technologies on social relations, urban space, and political structures. Her installation and procedural works often involve novel processes, like urban planning led by children, or a kayak taxi service along urban canals, which doubles as a research vehicle into the future of transport. These works take place in a wide range of contexts, from galleries and festivals to academic symposia and public spaces. Her widely acclaimed speculative fiction film FACELESS (2002–07), compiled from CCTV footage recovered under the UK's Data Protection Act, was also voiced by Tilda Swinton, and translated into nine languages. In 2012, Luksch was awarded the Marianne von Willemere Digital Arts Prize (Ars Electronica Centre and City of Linz) and the Austrian National Media Art Prize. Her work is included in the Collection Centre Georges Pompidou and on the Chris Marker website Gorgomancy.

Works include:

UNKNOWN TERITORIES (dance on film for Channel 4, 2014)
KAYAK LIBRE (water taxi service and geo-website, 2011–12, *Marianne von Willemere Digital Arts Prize)
LIMITATIONS PERMITTED (stereoscopic silent video installation in British Sign Language, 2009)
LOVE, PIRACY & THE OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS WEBLOG EXPANSION (participatory installation: text, procedural censorship, collective reading, 2009–, with Mukul Patel)
MAPPING CCTV (public intervention and short film for NHK, 2008)
FACELESS (data retrieval procedure and speculative fiction film, 2002–07)
ORCHESTRA OF ANXIETY (participatory installation: stainless steel harp strung with razor wire, 2004, with Mukul Patel)
BROADBANDIT HIGHWAY (self-generating road movie, approx. 5 years in length, 2001–06; *Prix Cybermovie, 24th International Moscow Film Festival)
VIRTUAL BORDERS (hybrid radio/internet infrastructure in S.E. Asia and documentary film, 1999–2003)
SO ODER ANDERS (documentary short, 16mm, 1996)
Martin REINHART

Martin Reinhart’s innovative exploration of film as artistic language is not limited to the making of films – he also develops hardware and processing solutions. He is committed to overcoming the creative boundaries written into industry standards through developing new tools and techniques. His inventions are often made available to other artists, or find a commercial after-life. Notable amongst his innovations are the tx-transform, a film technique that transposes the time axis, t, and one of the space axes, x (www.tx-transform.com/Eng/); Vertigo Rush, a mechanism to execute extreme dolly zooms (with extreme distortion of perspective); and Indiecam, a light, high resolution 3D camera system (used by Danny Boyle for TRANCE). His short films have been shown widely at media arts festivals including Ars Electronica, Linz (AT) 1998; Fantoche, Baden (CH) 1999; European Media Art Festival Osnabrück (D) 1999; DEAF 00, Rotterdam (NL) 2000, and the Festival International du nouveau cinéma nouveaux médias de Montréal, Montreal (CA) 2001. In his position as Curator for Photography at the Museum of Technology in Vienna, Reinhart’s research led to the rediscovery of the soundtrack for Battleship Potemkin (1928, Eisenstein), composed by Edmund Meisel for the touring and distribution of the film in the West. Although today he is focused more on creative partnerships and less on his own art, his works from the late 1990s, such as tx-transform, continue to be shown and discussed.

Artworks:

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY (with Nelson Ramirez de Arellano Conde, 2010)
IMAGO 1:1 (Susanna Kraus, 2006)
13 x17.000 – THE DEFINITE MOTIONPICTURE (1997)
TX-TRANSFORM (1992)

Short films:

IM FREIEN (Albert Sackl, 16 mm, 23 min)
PRIMAL SOUND (Katarina Matiasek, video, 14 min, 2007)
VERTIGO RUSH (Johann Lurf, 35 mm, 19 min, 2007)
3 MINUTEN (Christoph Brunner, 35 mm, 2006)
Thomas TODE

Thomas Tode works in Hamburg as freelance writer, curator (Hamburg Cinematheque, Cinepolis – Architektur & Stadt im Film, among others), and filmmaker. In his research and teaching (Universities of Hamburg, Bochum, Zürich, and Vienna), he focuses on essay film, the Soviet avant-garde, and political documentary film. Special interests are films on architecture, archeology, and those made for ‘re-education’.

Film programmes, symposia and exhibitions curated by Tode include ‘Angesichts des Äußersten: Die Filme über die Befreiung der Konzentrationslager und der lange Schatten der Bilder’ (Univ. Hamburg, 2015), ‘Die erwartete Katastrophe. Luftkrieg und Städtebau 1940–45’ (Freie Akademie der Künste Hamburg, 2013), ‘PhotoFilm!’ (National Gallery of Art Washington, 2012; Tate Modern London, 2010), and ‘bauhaus & film’ (Barbican Centre London, 2012; Weimar, Dessau, Berlin, Hamburg 2009), for which he tracked down film and light installation pieces by Bauhaus artists, many of which were thought lost.

Filmography:

*THE GREAT GAME: ARCHEOLOGY AND POLITICS* (Digibeta, 22 min, 2011)

*HAFENSTRASSE REVISITED* (16mm, 87 min, 2010)

*IN THE LAND OF CINEMA VETERANS. A FILM EXPEDITION AROUND DZIGA VERTOV* (16mm, 86 min, 1996)

*THE STAIRS IN THE PORT* (16mm, 75 min, 1991)

Selected bibliography:

*BAUHAUS & FILM* (2012)

*DER ESSAYFILM – ÄSTHETIK UND AKTUALITÄT* (2011)

*VIVA FOTOFILM – BEWEGT / UNBEWEGT* (2010)


*CHRIS MARKER – FILMEEKAYIST* (1997)

*JOHAN VAN DER KEUKEN: ABENTEUER EINES AUGES* (1987, 1992)
Acclaimed Scottish actress Tilda Swinton is known for her involvement in avant-garde films, mainstream cinema and other experimental & artistic projects. She began her career with the Royal Shakespeare Company in London before embarking on a close collaboration with filmmaker Derek Jarman. They realised a number of films together, including *Caravaggio* (1986), *The Last of England* (1988), *The Garden* (1990), *Edward II* (1991), and *Wittgenstein* (1993). She gained international recognition with the film *Orlando* (1992). Since then, she has continued to work on independent films, alongside projects for studios, including *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005) and the 2007 thriller *Michael Clayton*, for which she won an Academy Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Supporting Role.

**Filmography (Selected)**

- **GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL** (Wes Anderson, 2014)
- **SNOWPIERCER** (Bong Joon-ho, 2013)
- **ONLY LOVERS LEFT ALIVE** (Jim Jarmusch, 2013)
- **MOONRISE KINGDOM** (Wes Anderson, 2012)
- **WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN** (Lynne Ramsay, 2011)
- **IO SONO L’AMORE** aka **I AM LOVE** (Luca Guadagnino, 2009)
- **THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON** (David Fincher, 2008)
- **JULIA** (Erick Zonca, 2008)
- **MICHAEL CLAYTON** (Tony Gilroy, 2007)
- **FACELESS** (Manu Luksch, 2007)
- **THE DEEP END** (Scott McGehee/ David Siegel, 2001)
- **ORLANDO** (Sally Potter, 1992)
Siegfried FRIEDRICH

Siegfried Friedrich studied composition (under Iván Eröd and Erich Urbanner) and computer music (under Tamás Ungváry) in Vienna, followed by postgraduate studies in film scoring (with Klaus Peter Sattler) and a PhD in musicology (with Hartmut Krones and Gernot Gruber). Recipient of numerous awards (including First Prize, E. V. Karajan-Kulturfonds 2005 and the Cité internationale des Arts Residency in Paris 2011), he writes for film and theatre as well as for the concert hall. His multidimensional understanding of his métier extends from an encyclopedic knowledge of historic traditions to expertise in contemporary techniques and electronic music production. Sensitive to both the purity of acoustic tone and the subtleties possible with digital manipulation, Friedrich is a true musical polyglot.

Selected recent works - film:

MAPPAMUNDI, science-docu-fiction film (Bady Minck, LU/AT, 2015)

OPTICAL SOUND, short film made together with Elke Groen and Christian Neubacher (AT, 2014)

THE SILENT ENEMY, silent film by H.P. Carver (US, 1930) – new soundtrack for broadcast by ARTE, 2012

DAS GROSSE STAUNENE/VIA MALA, documentary (Thomas Kaiser, CH, 2008)

Selected recent works – theatre:

HĒUTE DIE FĒAHRTE (Botho Strauss), dir. W. Frank (Theater Chur 2011)

HEROS (Björn Steiert), dir. D. Lüdi (Zürich, 2011)

DER SCHACHT VON BABEL (W. Frank et al.). dir. W. Frank (Chur, 2010)

Selected recent works – concert:

TENEBROSO for overtone singer and double bass (2014)

Undécaphonie polymétrique. À la recherche de la foire perdue for barrel organ, with Henning Ballmann (2013) (Airolo / Festival Rümlingen)

ÜBERMALUNG 1 (Schacht von Babel) für Tonband und 7 Instrumentalisten, 2010 (Künstlerhaus Wien)

STRUCTURES, RÉMINISCENCES ET GHIRLANDES II FÜR KLAVIER SOLO, 2008 (Imprimerie Basel)
Hanna NORDHOLT and Fritz STEINGROBE


They have lectured at short film festivals and at various Goethe institutes and universities, including Institut für neue Musik, Darmstadt and Kunsthochschule ESAP, Porto. They teach stop-motion workshops at schools, universities, and festivals. Nordholt works as guest professor for 2D and 3D animation at the Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg.

Their curatorial work often focuses on experimental animation and visual music, and includes a programme for ‘LAB’ International Short Film Festival Hamburg, which they head.

**Selected animation films:**

*WUNDERKAMMERN* (2011)

*SILICIUM* (2007)

*DREI GRAZIEN* (2006)

*YO LO VI* (2003)

*PATAK* (2002)
Mukul PATEL

Mukul Patel plays predominantly with sound, text, and processes. As composer and sound artist, he has collaborated with artist filmmakers and many leading contemporary choreographers. As writer, his work ranges across territories and genres – a recent book on mathematics for children was shortlisted for the 2014 Royal Society Prize, and the script of DREAMS REWIRED is his second to be voiced by Tilda Swinton. His practice displays both analytic and synthetic approaches. When existing standards fail to accommodate a vision, he develops open, efficient solutions (for example, live immersive audio-visual environments, and stereoscopic film viewers). Mukul has run tactical media labs in arts faculties and taught space to architecture students. Major influences include the music of North India, 1960s–70s conceptual practice, and the OuLiPo.

Selected works:

SPIRAL PASS (music for Bayerisches Staatsballett, Munich chor. Russell Maliphant, 2014)


TEN THOUSAND WAVES (music for 9-screen installation by Isaac Julien, 2010)

LOVE, PIRACY & THE OFFICE OF RELIGIOUS WEBLOG EXPANSION (participatory installation: text, procedural censorship, collective reading, 2009–, with Manu Luksch)

FACELESS (soundtrack and script for speculative fiction film by Manu Luksch, 2007)

ORCHESTRA OF ANXIETY (participatory installation: stainless steel harp strung with razor wire, 2004, with Manu Luksch)

Company profiles

AMOUR FOU Vienna // Luxembourg

Founded in Luxembourg in 1995 and in Vienna in 2001, AMOUR FOU Luxembourg and AMOUR FOU Vienna, realise artistically exceptional feature, documentary and short films for the international market with international and, most frequently, European partners. Throughout the process AMOUR FOU stands for vision and pushing the envelope, whether in regard to aesthetics, production or distribution strategies. The focus is on European independent auteur cinema and the distinctive “handwriting” of the directors who work with AMOUR FOU. The associate partners of AMOUR FOU Vienna and AMOUR FOU Luxembourg are Bady Minck and Alexander Dumreicher-Ivanceanu.

Filmography (selected):

CASANOVA VARIATIONS (Michael Sturminger, 2014)
FIEBER (Elfi Mikesch, 2014)
AMOUR FOU (Jessica Hausner, 2014)
LE GRAND CAHIER / DAS GROSSE HEFT (János Szász, 2013)
DIE 727 TAGE OHNE KARAMO (Anja Salomonowitz, 2013)
NAKED OPERA (Angela Christlieb, 2013)
HANNAH ARENDT (Margarethe von Trotta, 2012)
LOOS ORNAMENTAL (Heinz Emigholz, 2008)
KURZ DAVOR IST ES PASSIERT (Anja Salomonowitz, 2007)
FACELESS (Manu Luksch, 2007)
TAXIDERMIA (György Pálfi, 2006)
MA MÈRE (Christophe Honoré, 2004)
PAS DE REPOS POUR LES BRAVES (Alain Guiraudie, 2003)
FAST FILM (Virgil Widrich, 2003)
IM ANFANG WAR DER BLICK (Bady Minck, 2003)
BILDSCHÖN Filmproduktion

Founded 1997 by Linda Matern, BILDSCHÖN has worked to strengthen independent film and forge new paths through her productions. Wide-ranging expertise, international co-productions and a focus in Eastern Europe have made BILDSCHÖN a pathfinder in the increasingly close cultural and artistic world of Europe.

Filmography (selected):

*BINGO – TOLETZT ENTSCHEED JÜMMERS DAT GLÜCK* (Gisela Tuchтенhagen and Margot Neubert-Maric, 2012)

*LYRIX – THE POET HENDRIK ROST* (Kirstin Büttner and Linda Matern, 2010)

*THE LADY WITH THE LITTLE DOG* (Julij Koltun, 2009)

*FROM NOWHERE, WITH LOVE* (Julij Koltun, 2009)

*ZULETZT BEFREIT MICH DOCH DER TOD* (Beate Middeke, 2008)


*GERMAN COWBOY* (Joern Hinkel, 2006)

*HERR SCHILLER HAT GEWÄHLT* (Kirstin Büttner and Linda Matern, 2006)

*EH SIE VERKLINGEN* (Joern Hinkel, 2005)

*BAUEN AUF VERGANGENHEIT – DAS STILWERK IN HAMBURG* (Christoph Schuch, 2004)

*OLEG POPOV – DER SONNENCLOWN* (Juri Chaschtschewatski, 2003)

*IT DON'T MEAN A THING, IF IT AIN'T GOT THAT SWING* (Niels Bolbrinker, 2001)

*FORKLIFT DRIVER KLAUS – THE FIRST DAY ON THE JOB* (Jörg Wagner and Stefan Prehn, 2000)

*TRADING IMAGES* (Casey Chan, Suma Jonsson, Lynn Hershman, Wanjiru Kinyanjui, Brigitte Krause, 2000)
AMBIENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

AMBIENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS (AIS) is a London-based research and development company that produces critical, intermedia artwork at the intersection of society and technology. The form of the work ranges from film and sound/light installations to books, theatre/performance, and responsive environments, and typically involves public participation. The establishment of processes; the creation of tools and platforms; research, archiving and documentation; the bridging of real and virtual spaces – all are signal features of AIS projects. Founded in 2000 by Manu Luksch and codirected by her and Mukul Patel, AIS runs the ambientspace studio in East London to host public events and international artist residency programmes.

AIS has presented work internationally in a wide variety of contexts, from Tate Modern (London), Kiasma Theatre (Helsinki), NTT–ICC gallery (Tokyo) and the Sydney Biennale to the streets of Hong Kong, the hills of the Golden Quadrangle (S. E. Asia) and the Burning Man festival (Nevada).
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