

Great concept...

Now what?

text by
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PRACTICE

As this paper is a case for applied graphic design, I would like to explore the aspects of applied graphic design by four case studies:

Case #1

Applying your designs in the real world makes you work with a subject instead of about a subject.

Applying your designs in the real world challenges your prior assumptions and can lead to unexpected and effective results.

As a contemporary designer you have social responsibilities and are asked to “*tackle challenges posed by the rapidly evolving new-media landscape, and seek answers to the problems of tomorrow.*” □

Student profile Graphic Design at the Royal Academy of the Arts, The Hague, <https://www.kabk.nl/en/programmes/bachelor/graphic-design> Social and political involvement can lead to structural changes in our society. It feels very tricky to touch upon themes big as equality, climate change, women rights, etcetera. If you decide to work with these sensitive topic, it should be very on point or either positionless. Comedian Tim Minchin describes this as a false dichotomy.

“Most of society’s arguments are kept alive by a failure to acknowledge nuance. We tend to generate false dichotomies and then try to argue

one point using two entirely different sets of assumptions.” □ *Minchin, Tim, 2013, Speech at the graduation ceremony of The University of Western Australia,*
<http://www.timminchin.com/2013/09/25/occasional-address/>

A way to break free from these false, rigid dichotomies as a designer, is to work with your subject instead of about your subject. This will help you understand a subject from within and it decreases the chance of wrong assumptions. It can lead to a more nuanced view and you will be better informed since you are close to the primary source.

Sarah van Sonsbeeck v.s. We Are Here FC

The current migration flow is a topic a lot of artists and designers are working with nowadays. Recently artist Sarah van Sonsbeeck exhibited the project *we may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now* □ 2017, Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, 19th of May till 17th of September at the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam. The Oude Kerk used to be a port church where ships were blessed and prayers were done for seamen to come home safe. □ 2017, Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, 19th of May till 17th of September



Exhibition of Sarah van Sonsbeeck in the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, photo by Gert Jan van

Rooij, 2017

Aesthetically and conceptually this project is appealing. But what impression does this exhibition leaves on the visitor? An aesthetic impact? Some knowledge about the history of the Oude Kerk? An interest in Sarah van Sonsbeecks work? Hee, but wait - was she not responding on the wave of migration we are dealing with in Europe? I can image she was aware of the sensitivity of the subject and decided not to make any statement about it. But dealing with such a sensitive, social and urgent topic I think you should aim for a bigger impact than just an aesthetic one.

Take for example the work done by photographer Katarina Gališinová. She decided to spend time with the people from We Are Here FC. We Are Here FC is a soccer team part of the Amsterdam based organization We Are Here. □ **We Are Here**, <http://wijzijnhier.org/who-we-are/> The team consists of refugees residing in Amsterdam despite the fact that

they have not (yet) gotten a residence permit. They are not allowed to work and the municipality of Amsterdam provides them with only a night shelter (commonly referred to as Bed, Bath and Bread arrangement). They use the simple game of soccer to unite and create a supportive community. □ [We Are Here](#), <http://wijzijnhier.org/who-we-are/>

Katarína got involved with We Are Here out of personal interest. By investing time in both the people and the organization, she gained an insight into the structure and the strength of We Are Here. In the beginning, the Wereldhuis Amsterdam □ [Wereldhuis Amsterdam](#), <http://wereldhuis.org/> provided the soccer players of We Are Here FC with the simple tools needed to play soccer. By spending time with the team Katarína drew the conclusion that there was still something missing: the visibility of the team. You need two to tango, but how can Dutch society tango with these men if they do not even know about their existence?

Katarína started documenting their daily life and tried to create a narrative with these images. As she said: *"It felt logical to do this. I wanted to show these people to the world and thought I would be able to capture them in the purest form by becoming a part of their daily struggle. However, I was not satisfied with the impact of the images and for some time could not find the reason for this unsatisfactory feeling."* Until she decided to make a official soccer portrait photo series of the team members. *"By photographing them as real football stars I focused on their talent as soccer players and not on their*

misery as refugees out of a procedure. When showing the end result to the guys I understood what was wrong with my first approach. When seeing themselves in this new context their eyes sparkled. As many of them say, being a refugee out of procedure makes you feel like nobody. They lost their homes, families, jobs and dignity but seeing themselves as soccer players, all together in unified shirts, made them feel proud of being who they are and what they have been through." □ Interview with

Katarína Gališinová, 2017, 6 December



After a while, Katarína involved graphic designer Menno de Bruijn. Together they worked on a new visual identity for We Are Here FC. They organized a few brainstorm sessions with the players and as a result, Menno came up with a couple of proposals for a new logo and a website. Followed up by merchandise items such as soccer cards for each player of the team, a poster, a badge and a We Are Here FC scarf.



We Are Here FC logo



We Are Here soccer cards, photo by Katarína Gališinová



We Are Here FC batch, photo by Katarína Gališinová



We Are Here FC scarf, photo by Katarína Gališinová

Menno used several visual elements that refer to particular characteristics of We Are Here FC. The hand in the We Are Here FC logo symbolizes the rejection of refugees by the Dutch state and at the same time it is a call for attention. The cross in the middle symbolizes a location on a map - the actual being 'here'. Moreover, the three crosses of the well known Amsterdam logo are incorporated in the scarf as well. The aesthetic aspects are clearly recognizable as a soccer identity.

In the long term, the new visual identity will contribute to the visibility of the refugees within the Dutch society. Menno and Katarína decided to go out there, talk with the soccer players and apply their creative abilities to improve the situations of rejected refugees in the Netherlands. By doing this, they found a way out of the dichotomy by applying their design skills in the real world.

On the 2nd of July 2017, Katarina, Menno, Sophie Schwartz and I organized a one-day soccer tournament: The Royal Super Cup. We invited the

refugees of We Are Here FC to play together with teachers, staff, students and alumni from the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague. The goal of the gathering was simply to connect on an equal human level through a game of football.

For a day mixing art school people with the players of We Are Here FC lead to beautiful encounters. We gave the players a guided tour through the graduation show after which we created mixed teams of students, staff, teachers and We Are Here FC players. Everybody was eager to win the Royal Super Cup and gain eternal fame.

Although The Royal Super Cup was a one-day event, it brought people together and can be seen as the cherry on top of the work initiated by Katarina.



The Royal Super Cup participants, July 2017

Case #2

**Applying your designs in
the real world leads to the
possibility of creating
content as a designer.**

Where a lot of designers are able to make proper design for existing content, action and a participatory approach leads to the possibility to create content yourself as a designer. With the use of your creative skills, this content can be visualized and get accessible for a broader audience. By combining content creation and your creative skills you can distinguish yourself from other designers which can be very valuable in the competitive environment of design.

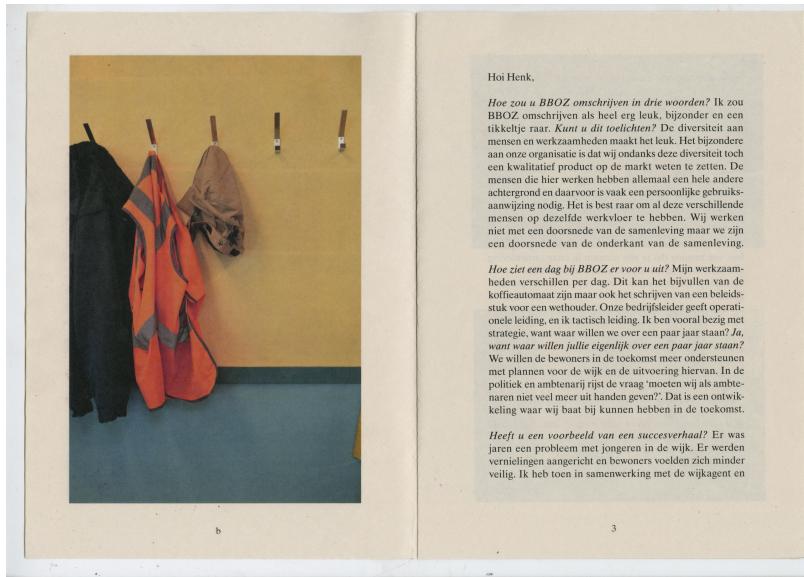
Stichting Buurtbeheer en –ontwikkeling Zeeheldenkwartier

Stichting Buurtbeheer en –ontwikkeling Zeeheldenkwartier is an organisation based in The Hague. Also known as BBOZ, they help people that have difficulties taking part in society. They provide personal guidance and work closely together with local authorities of The Hague. They provide the city with employees that contribute to the maintenance of the public space.

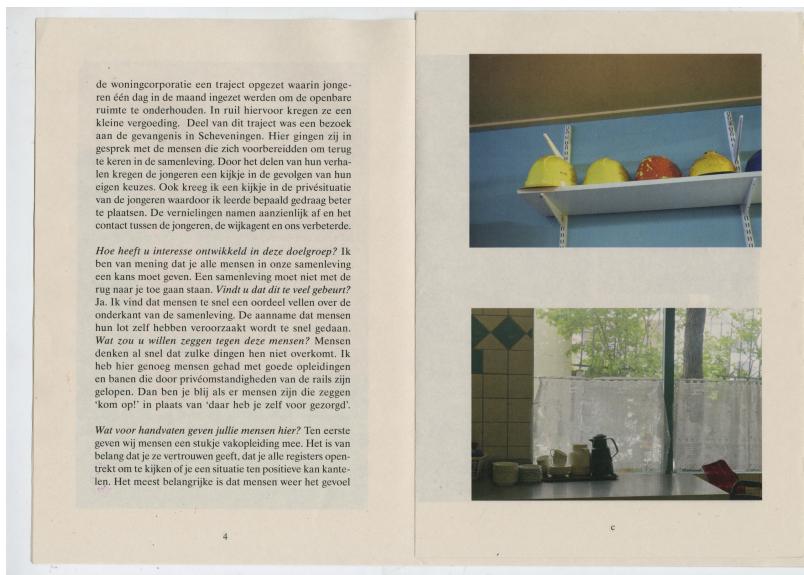
BBOZ asked me to come up with a new corporate identity consisting of a new logo and a website design proposal. What I had to offer as a graphic designer to BBOZ were my design skills and solution driven concepts. As I plead for in Case #1, I wanted to work with the team and employees of BBOZ to get a better insight in their organization. Therefore, I decided to visit the location and started a conversation with the people behind the organization. In that way harvest valuable personal stories.

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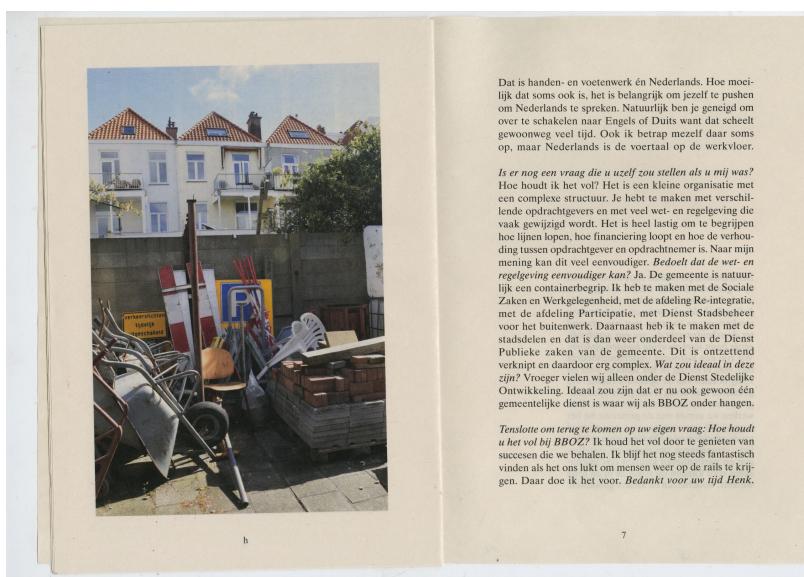
In the end, I designed a corporate identity as BBOZ asked for but incorporated the design in a publication existing of the interview with the director and photos made of the workplace. In this way I gave the new identity a broader context and communicated their story rather than only a designed logo to the outside world.



Pages from the publication BBOZ KABK, 2017, design by Lin Ven



Pages from the publication BBOZ KABK, 2017, design by Lin Ven



Pages from the publication BBOZ KABK, 2017, design by Lin Ven

Case #3

Applying your designs in the real world gives the opportunity to measure the effects of your design.

There are different ways to approach topics as a designer. Deciding for a participatory approach gives you the opportunity to measure the effects of your design. I would like to compare two projects dealing with the same topic with different design approaches.

We Are Public v.s. Poster Almanak

We Are Public is a community based, cultural platform located in Amsterdam, The Hague and Brabant. People can become a member for 15 euro a month and in return they are able to visit a preselected cultural program for free. We Are Public is founded by Bas Morsch and Leon Caren as a reaction to the cultural budget cuts by the Dutch government. They took concrete action and came up with a long-term solution for the problem. As they say themselves: “*a new reality asks for new ideas.*” □

About page, We Are Public, <https://www.wearepublic.nl/en/> We Are Public is able to pay the makers, provide members with a wide range of cultural programs and contribute to a healthier cultural environment by

filling up concert halls, theaters and cinemas. We Are Public is a success since visitor rates in the Dutch cultural field went up and it is proven that people started to visit a more varied selection of cultural programs. They are planning to expand their platform to Haarlem and Delft in the beginning of 2018, aiming to be a national platform in the future.

The Amsterdam based graphic design collective Almanak (Rob van den Nieuwenhuizen, Jeremy Jansen, Barbara Hennequin) reacted in a different way on the subsidy cuts than Bas Morsch and Leon Caren did. With their graphic expertise Almanak designed a poster showing the direct consequences of the extreme cultural subsidy cuts. This poster was part of the Graphic Design Festival Breda in 2012.

COBRA MUSEUM	HET SCHEEPVAARTMUSEUM	DE VLEESHAL
7.000.000	10.202.598 8.565.000	200.000
IMAGINE TO	TEYLERS MUSEUM	WITTE DE WITH
115.000 0	2.832.861 2.542.000	500.000 500.000
JOODS HISTORISCH MUSEUM	THEATER INSTITUUT NEDERLAND	2.139.000
3.204.357 3.155.000	2.107.000 0	200.000 0
KERAMIEK MUSEUM PRINCESSEHOF	VAN GOGH MUSEUM	DE ATELIEREN
1.372.426 1.418.000	7.515.000 6.666.000	800.000 0
KRÖLLER-MÖLLER MUSEUM	ZUIDERZEE MUSEUM	RIJKSAKADEMIE
7.081.000 6.957.000	7.543.149 7.441.000	2.500.000 0
LETTERKUNDIG MUSEUM	DE APPEL	BRAND
2.892.732 2.220.000	500.000 500.000	697.000
MOTI	ARTBEAT	JAN VAN EYCK ACADEMIE
500.000 0	430.000 0	1.000.000 1.000.000
MUSEUM BOERHAAVE	BAK	NIADEC/AVE
4.927.159 4.678.000	500.000 200.000	7.800.000 7.810.000
MUSEUM CATHARIJNECONVENT	KUNSTHAL	DROOG DESIGN
4.598.784 4.508.000	350.000 0	475.000 100.000
MUSEUM MEERMANNO	MAMA	DIGITAAL ERFGOED NL
1.710.068 1.385.000	200.000 0	620.000 570.000
MUSEUM VOLKENKUNDE	MARRES	ARCHIPRIX
10.552.508 10.107.000	500.000 500.000	225.500 225.500
NATIONAAL GLASMUSEUM	HU	ARCHINED
165.000 157.000	500.000 500.000	70.000 0
NATURALIS	EUROPA	EUROPA
16.300.000 15.810.000	500.000 0	420.000 0
NEDERLANDS FOTOMUSEUM	NP3	BUREAU EUROPA
1.210.000 1.095.000	140.000 0	300.000 0
NL MUZIEK INSTITUUT	ONOMATOPEE	SUBMARINE
530.000 0	150.000 0	475.000 350.000
NL OPENLUCHTMUSEUM	DE PAVILJOENS	WAAG SOCIETY
11.092.000 10.992.000	(500.000 0)	600.000 500.000
PALEIS HET LOO	SKOR INTERNATIONAL	STEIM
11.987.000 11.181.000	500.000 0	450.000 237.250
PERSNMUSEUM	SMART PROJECT SPACE	NINKE
300.000 0	500.000 0	200.000 0
RIJKSMUSEUM AMSTERDAM	STROOM	V2
27.899.699 26.093.000	500.000 200.000	588.750 400.000

Poster by Almanak, 2012

In the 2012 catalogue of the Graphic Design Festival Breda the poster is explained as followed:

"The numbers mentioned on the poster, are subsidy amounts per year for a selection of cultural institutions (fine arts, design, architecture and e-culture) as advised by the Dutch Council for Culture and by The Netherlands Architecture Fund in their advice report for cultural subsidies. As seen on the poster, a vast number of cultural institutions will probably be annihilated by our own government. As a result they'll disappear completely from the

Dutch cultural landscape.” □ 2012, Catalogue Graphic

Design Festival Breda,

https://issuu.com/gdfb/docs/gdfb2012_poster_project

We Are Public and Almanak have different intentions with their initiatives. Where We Are Public came up with a long-term alternative as a solution to a problem, Almanak solely wanted to visualize the impact of the cultural budget cuts. By raising awareness with their static design, Almanak contributes in a positive way to the discourse. But the big difference is that We Are Public created the possibility to measure the effect of their action taken. Where We Are Public has concrete results showing the effect of their actions (higher visitor rates in the cultural field in The Netherlands), Almanak stays a static design which makes it impossible to measure concrete effects caused by their work.

Case #4

**Applying your designs in
the real world does not
always lead to the desired
effect but it can still
function as a personal
outlet.**

When you decide to test or apply your designs in the real world you most probably have a desired effect in mind. Sometimes your action can lead to unexpected effects, as I explained in Case #1. These effects can be positive but can also be disappointing. Although your participatory approach does not always lead to the desired effect, it can still function as a personal outlet.

SIRE v.s. SIRE-EUS?!

A good example is a project I recently did together with producer Renée Janssen and graphic designer Vera van der Seyp.

SIRE is a Dutch independent organization that uses campaigns to create awareness about social topics within our society. In 2017 SIRE launched the campaign ‘Laat jij jouw jongen genoeg jongen zijn?’

2017, Campaign initiated by SIRE, freely translated: Do you give your boy enough freedom to be masculine?

<http://laatjijjouwjongengenoegjongenzijn.nl/> The goal of this campaign was to encouraged parents to let their sons behave more masculine. Together with a lot of other people, I strongly disagreed with the way they tried to make a problem visible. SIRE formulated the initial problem as followed:

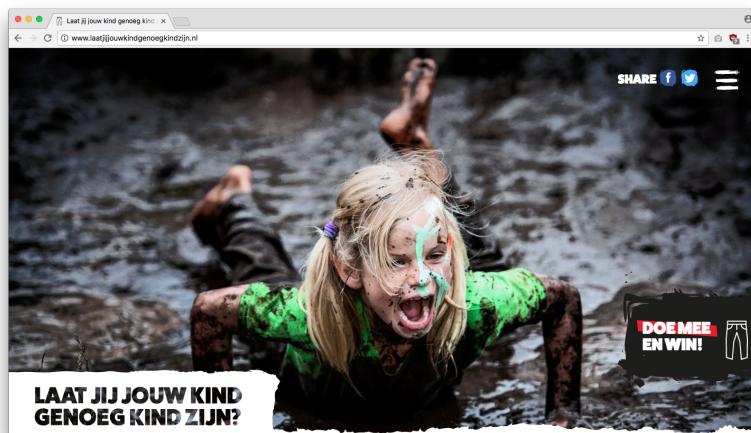
“Boys and girls are equal, but not the same. We, Dutch educators, sometimes lose sight of the fact that boys develop in a different way and learn differently than girls. In general, educators expect children to behave calmly, listen carefully and sit still. While boys learn more by discovering, experimenting, taking risks, doing. ‘Boys-behavior’ is less appreciated by educators in recent years. Restraining boys inhibits their development.” □ Translated from the website

<http://laatjijjouwjongengenoegjongenzijn.nl/>

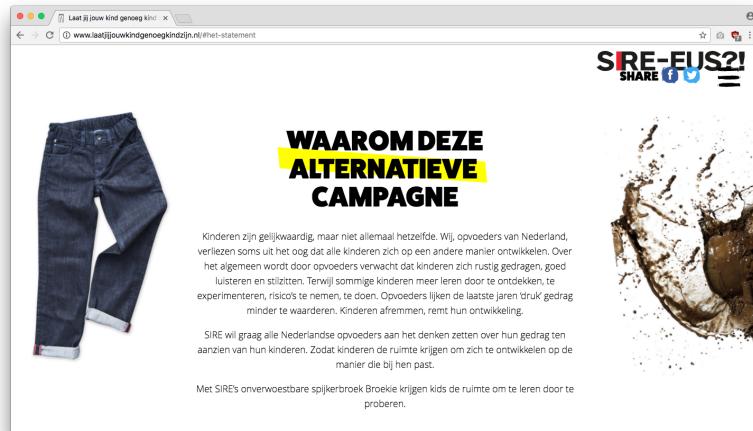
Their commercial was widely broadcasted on national television. In this commercial SIRE visualizes boys-behavior as young boys playing in the forest, running around wildly, experimenting with fire, and so on. In our opinion this behavior should not be labeled as boys-behavior only. There are enough young boys who do not feel like horsing around and there are many girls that actually do feel like that. In our opinion the campaign of SIRE is a form of problematic gender stereotyping. We consider it a missed opportunity to not look beyond these clichés and to actually focus on the fact that all children should experience more freedom of movement. Instead of the question *How can we let our boys be*

more masculine?, we think the following question should be asked: *How do we give all children their freedom of movement?*

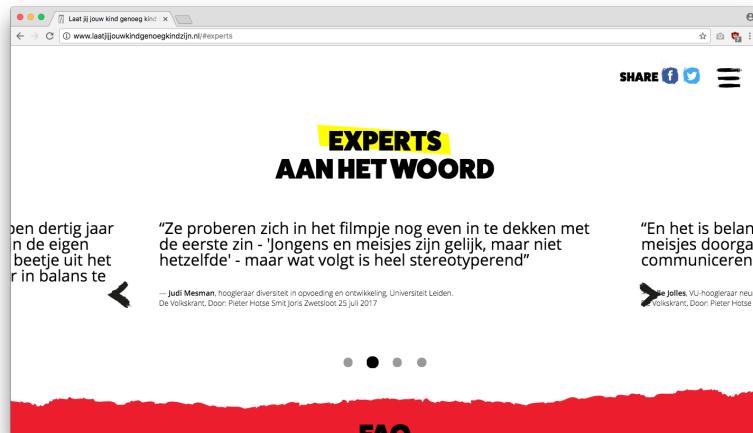
We decided to take action and create an alternative campaign within 48 hours after SIRE launched their campaign. The original website SIRE consisted of the commercial, several tips for educators, quotes from educational experts and a FAQ section. We copied the original campaign website from SIRE and changed the content of the website. For this we consulted a primary school teacher. She rewrote tips that were meant for boys to behave more masculine, into versions that were inclusive and addressing children in general. We adjusted the imagery from only boys to boys and girls and wrote a statement to explain our initiative.



Website of our alternative campaign 'Laat jij je kind genoeg kind zijn?'



Website of our alternative campaign 'Laat jij je kind genoeg kind zijn?'



Website of our alternative campaign 'Laat jij je kind genoeg kind zijn?'

After launching our website and Facebook page, we wrote an open letter to SIRE and explained why we strongly disagree with their campaign. We introduced our alternative campaign and proposed to meet and have an open discussion about their approach and our proposal. They replied but unfortunately were not open for meeting us.

Renée, Vera and I decided to not only ventilate our frustrations but actually take action to make this frustration visible. Next to the 350 likes of our Facebook page, it is hard to measure the concrete effect of our campaign. At least we were able to

translate the collective criticism into a concrete form;
our alternative campaign.

Conclusion [2/2]

To conclude, applying your designs in the real world makes you work with a subject instead of about a subject. This can challenge your prior assumptions and can lead to unexpected and effective results.

Secondly, applying your designs in the real world leads to the possibility of creating content as a designer. Thirdly, applying your designs creates the possibility to measure the effects of your design.

Lastly, applying your designs in the real world makes it possible to measure the outcome. In case of an undesired result you at least gave yourself the opportunity to ventilate your frustration by taking action.

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