Socially Infamous: Individual and Community Culture at the Notorious Burnside Skatepark

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Abstract and Key Words

Abstract

This research project involves sociocultural validation of the founding members and early participants of Burnside Skatepark. The group developed socioculturally through the creation and use of an internationally renowned Do It Yourself (DIY) skatepark. Located under the east side of the Burnside Bridge in Portland, Oregon and founded in 1990, Burnside Skatepark is one of the most famous skateparks in the world, infamous for territorialism, attitude, and difficulty. On the other hand, the park has been built with dedication, devoid of city funding and approval, in an area known, in the earlier days of the park, as a crime infested, former industrial district. Through the do it yourself creation of Burnside skatepark, came the sociocultural cultivation and development of the founding participants and skaters. Additionally, the creation of the park provided substantial influence in the sociocultural development of a number of professional skateboarders and influenced the creation of parks worldwide. By identifying the sociocultural development and cultivation of those involved with the Burnside skatepark, specifically two of the founders, and one professional skateboarder, consideration can be provided into how skateboarding, creating a space, and skate participation may lead to significant development of community, social integrity, and self-worth even in the face of substantial gentrification.

Key Words

Skateboarding, Portland, Culture, Skateboard, Sociocultural, Gentrification, Skatepark

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- -Experienced branding, managerial, and creative professional for 10 years.
- A friendly, fun, enthusiastic, and reliable team player.
- -Create, produce, and manage with attention to detail and quality



Education



Master of Science Arts Management

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Work Experience

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Creative Producer & Photographer: Subjekt Objekt; Portland, OR 2017

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Freelance Photographer and Content Strategist: Hames Ellerbe; Oregon 2013-Present

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Project & Marketing Manager: Mt Bachelor Resort; Bend OR 2007-2012

-Effectively raised park usage 200% by utilizing compelling techniques and practices to create a fascinating and creative product. Directed and created brand centric content, events, and programs to inventively portray the product. Implemented a branding strategy to establish recognition and spread awareness.

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Project & Operations Supervisor: Northstar California Resort; Truckee, California 2012-2014

-Created a high quality product, decreased labor hours by 124 per week; spearheaded efficiency techniques through training of 14 team members, all while improving the process and systems.







Managenient	****
Marketing	***
Design	****
Events	****
Public Relations	*****
Data & Content	****
Budgeting	****
Training	***
Operations	***
Multimedia Production	****
Sponsor Development	****
Branding	****
Interdent, Relations	****
Planning	****
Social Media	****

Adobe Illustrator	****
Adobe Photoshop	****
Adobe Premiere	****
Adobe Lightroom	****
Adobe InDesign	****
Adobe After Effects	食食食食食
Microsoft Office Suite	****
Final Cut Studio	食食食食食
Website Design	食食食食食
Mac OS	****
Windows OS	****
Cinematography	****
Photography	****
Hootsuite	****
lconosquare	****

















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Introduction

Early in life, I found an irresistible attraction to skateboarding. Although my skills at skateboarding continually needed improvement, my interest in building skate features eventually morphed into an immersive awareness of skateboard subculture. During much of my youth, skateboarding had been going through a revival from the dark ages of the mid-eighties to early nineties (Brown, Edmiston, & Peralta, 2012). The dark age came through several early missteps in skatepark design. These mistakes lead to a loss of interest, due to a lack of skatepark creativity, flow, and skate enjoyment (Brown, Edmiston, & Peralta, 2012). Moreover, at this time, the skateboard community was small enough to allow for knowledge to be spread throughout the skate community by word of mouth. In this way, as well as through reading magazines and watching videos, I learned of Burnside Skatepark, and the infamous status the park held as a legendary skate mecca. The renowned nature of Burnside was not only revealed through these publications, but also exposed me to a rough history of the park. Personal understanding, along with knowledge gained through interviewing key influencers for this research project was instrumental in the formulation of this research.

Skateboarding is a fascinating subculture, closely related to counterculture, and tightly intertwined with lifestyle, sports, and art. With humble beginnings in Southern California, the subculture of skateboarding has currently spread throughout the world. Moreover, the growth of skateboarding has had an influential presence on several generations, leading to careers, community formation, lifelong pursuit, and individual development (Brown, Edmiston, & Peralta, 2012). Although skateboarding is expressively displayed through numerous means, performance of maneuvers is the defining individual facet and is frequently performed with other participants. During skateboarding's progression, beginning on the west coast of the United States, local

governments began to construct parks for the participants to congregate. Particularly, these were created as deterrence from participation in the lifestyle on the streets and to provide a home to the growing number of enthusiasts. Ever evolving from their inception, parks are now designed by professional artists and skaters, becoming a community unto their own as they provide a location for skaters to develop individually.

A Brief History of Skateboarding

Since the late eighties, skateboarding has seen a great resurgence from the dark ages of the mid-eighties, and is embraced by communities across the world (Brown, Edmiston, & Peralta, 2012). Skateparks began appearing in California during the skateboarding revival of the seventies and early eighties. These parks were largely created from the influence of a group of swimming pool skaters known as the Zephyr (Z-boys) Skate Team out of Venice, CA (Friedman, Nemeth, Orsi, Ostroff, & Peralta, 2001). Legendary skater, businessman, and documentarian, Stacy Peralta, gained fame with the Z-boys. Embracing knowledge gained from his Z-boys experience, Peralta co-founded Powell-Peralta Skateboards (Brown, Edmiston, & Peralta, 2012). This skateboard company provided a platform to create the mythical Bones Brigade, a prominent and significant team for Powell-Peralta. In particular, the Bones Brigade shaped modern skateboarding. Influential members exampled by Tony Hawk and Rodney Mullen, invented and performed multitudes of tricks such as, the moving ollie, the kickflip, the mctwist, the varial, and the cabollerial (Brown, Edmiston, & Peralta, 2012). Additionally, the group pioneered skateboard advertising, equipment, pro models, and formulated professional skateboarding as an occupation (Brown, Edmiston, & Peralta, 2012). Although the group had a permanent and lasting effect on skateboarding, they had a massive influence on skateparks and the surrounding communities (Brown, Edmiston, & Peralta, 2012). Moreover, their influence led to the resurgence of

skateboarding after the mid-eighties to the early nineties destructive era (Brown, Edmiston, & Peralta, 2012). During this dark-age period, Skateboarding participation not only dropped significantly, but skateparks were also demolished due to their improper build. (Brown, Edmiston, & Peralta, 2012). The time of resurgence, beginning in the early mid-nineties, brought reflection and a subculture of identity from a *do it yourself* attitude rich with creativity and stronger community development. Moreover, with the resurgence, temporary skateparks began to take a more fluid and modern form. As time has progressed, some parks have stagnated, while others have constantly changed and morphed to keep pace with the progressing skate culture within the development of the surrounding communities.

Skateparks have become central in a multitude of settings in communities across the world. Existing in a variety of neighborhoods, and geographical areas, each location determines how the park is designed and built. With the birth of skateparks on the west coast, the Pacific Northwest quickly became a mecca for skateboarding and a leader in the creation of skateparks. Portland is an epicenter for both, being known as "the skate capitol of the world", with more skateparks per capita than any other city in the United States (Portland Skateparks, n.d). In fact, Portland made an exciting move, "in 2000, the City Council enacted City Code Section 16.70.410, making it legal to skateboard on most city streets" (*Your Guide*, n.d.).

Portland's Burnside Skatepark

Nestled under the eastside of Portland's Burnside Bridge, Burnside Skatepark began as a do it yourself (DIY) park created by founding members, Bret Taylor, Chuck Willis, Osage Buffalo, Mark "Red" Scott, and Sage Bolyard. Numerous other skaters have assisted and continue additions under the watchful eyes of the Burnside Park's Board of Directors. Burnside's DIY ethos

is self-proclaimed and comes from a mindset and work ethic driven by a need to create what was needed to skateboard without terms provided by authorities.

In 1990, Bret Taylor began building wooden skate features underneath a bridge in Northwest Portland until residing officials shut down the project. Afterward, Taylor thought about skateboard sessions below the concrete Burnside Bridge during the late eighties and realized concrete could be shaped at the base of a slanted wall below the bridge to form a feature. Furthermore, in the fall of 1990 he mentioned the idea to roommates, Chuck Willis and Osage Buffalo. With an Osage declaration of a particular day to begin, the trio proceeded to shape a lone bag of concrete against the base of the wall into a crude ramp. Soon after, skateboarding at the location followed as the group declared their initial build a successful beginning to skating under the bridge. In addition to this accomplishment, Mark Scott joining with his friend Sage Bolyard. built another ramp against the wall, so transfer between ramps would be an easy transfer skate line. With two ramps in place, Mark and Sage initiated and circulated knowledge of the location to a group of select friends resulting in expansion of the skatepark excluding city funding or permission. Creating features without a plan, they built in respect to what would work best with the previously fabricated feature all the while maintaining speed and flow. While the infancy stages of Burnside Skatepark were created devoid of city approval and funding, the now thriving park, gained city approval in 1992 (Lombard, 2017). At present, the park still exists as DIY, but receives no city funding while sustaining a Board of Directors, who raise money through donations and fundraisers. With twenty-eight years of existence in Portland, Burnside easily represents how skateparks are viewed as athletic facilities, while establishing and embracing the valuable unrecognized community cornerstones of skateparks.

Social, cultural, and community development are at the foundation of skateparks and are achieved through the art and sport of skateboarding. Skateboarding provides creative outlets for youth and adolescents where they are able to grow culturally and socially, all while developing robust communities in otherwise forgotten locations, such as Burnside Skatepark. Furthermore, skateparks manufacture a creative space for this occurring development, in spite of surrounding gentrification. However, skateparks, specifically Burnside, have been the subject for substantial scrutiny concerning their purpose and skate community development. Current research revealed a limiting view into the skateboarding subculture and skateparks as a location for sociocultural and communal development. Conflicts with popular culture viewpoints and stereotypes are frequent within the skateboarding subculture due to a lack of understanding from the general public.

From awareness of Burnside through skateboarding and snowboarding in my youth, I drew inspiration from the park for a previous career building snowboard terrain parks. During its existence, the park has gained a legendary and infamous reputation. Furthermore, due to this reputation, along with previous graduate research, I became intrigued by the subject of Burnside and how the park's cultural significance pertained, not only to the sport, but also to the individuals involved. Additionally, upon finding no current research on the subject and having visited the park throughout the years, while noticing significant change each time, lead to a desire to research the subject. With the same individuals involved throughout the parks history of existence, intriguing aspects of both individual and communal culture development seemed to demand investigation. Finally, at the very minimum, the story of Burnside would reveal the more hidden yet significant impact of the park on the founding individual's life paths.

Method

Researching skateboarding and skateparks, proved support for the Burnside claims, but did not touch on the topical matter proposed for the park. Primarily the research focused on adolescent development and gentrification surrounding skateboard culture. Furthermore, I determined that a short documentary would be optimal to portray findings. While using the literature as a base to guide ethnographic research, I began the process by contacting various members of the skateboard industry. Moreover, this was imperative due to the protective nature of those who participate and built Burnside. While skateboarders resonate with other skateboarders, the members of the park hesitate to allow an outsider to conduct research or create publications regarding the park. Contacting a previous connection, famed skateboard industry team manager, Mickey Reyes, lead to a liaison with Sage Bolyard. Meeting over Tecate beers to discuss skateboarding developed an immediate initial contact rapport with Sage. This connection proved significant to building mutual trust and respect concerning the explanation of my research into the story of Burnside. After formation of this relationship, I soon discovered Sage would be the most important focus of the cultural impact of the Park. The interviewing process was set in motion, with Sage providing vital contacts for interviewees.

Utilizing connections with Sage and other contacts, such as Tal Roberts, supplementary interviewing was initiated. Over the course of two months, I traveled to Portland conducting fourteen subject interviews with predetermined questions. Interviews began with rapport building by creating conversation surrounding skateboarding, and explanation of the research. Interviewing would commence with predetermined and sometimes spur of the moment questioning, which was based on methods found in documentary research. Notably, interaction would occur between myself and park participants at the park or at various other locations, allowing for observation of

their demeanor and characteristics. Furthermore, spending many days observing and interacting with participants and founding members of the park, allowed for numerous documentation methods, such as photo, video and audio. Acquiring photographs to augment the documentary proved to be somewhat simplified due to Sage's numerous contacts. Filtering through hours of footage and selecting clips proved to be tedious but invaluable for the documentary. Moreover, synthesizing the audio and visual clips involved filtering and prioritizing selects (the most useful clips), selecting songs from Creative Commons while imports were made into Adobe Premiere Pro. Organizing the clips in the most compelling and coherent order was imperative, as this was followed by color grading visual clips and equalizing the audio. Finally, the product was edited together with visuals matching sounds, music, and voice overs.

The eighteen-minute documentary begins with a broad view of the state of Oregon's natural beauty; a connection is made between the audience and the documentary. The documentary then focuses closer on Portland drawing the viewer into the subject, creating character and conflict. The story continues with the history and evolution of the park, followed by addressing of Burnside's reputation, the cultural impact on Sage, and finally concluding with thoughts on the park.

This research involved several broad topical areas, which are a subset of the overarching topic of sociocultural development through Burnside Skatepark. These topics include individual development in skateparks, Burnside Skatepark history, skateparks as a creative place, participant development at Burnside, gentrification's effect on the skatepark, and community development through Burnside. Understanding the function of these individual topics provides essential insight into how they relate to one another. Moreover, these relationships are visibly evident in the connection between sociocultural development and Burnside Skatepark. Reviewing literature on

related topics provided insight into how skateparks supply environments for development through a creative space.

Literature Review

Since the inception of skateparks into mainstream culture, these locations have served as valuable community cornerstones. The purpose of this review will be to examine available literature concerning the existence of skateparks as creative community spaces serving as environments of cultivation for both individual and community growth. Skateparks appeal to a variety of people in modern society and in contrast to popular perspective, skateboarding is one of the largest sports in the United States (Howell, 2008). "The number of skateboarders in the United States has grown from 4.5 million in 1995 to 12 million in 2005" (Howell, 2008, p.476). Concurrently, as the demand for skateparks grew and the number of parks rose from 165 in 1997 to 2,100 in 2008 (Howell, 2008). While this research is ten years old, I knew from previous personal experience that growth seems to still be on the rise, with new skateparks and contests being created throughout the country. Skateparks provide an integral location in communities for participants to explore creativity, social activity, and refine and develop individual and cultural environments. Skateparks function as a recreational space, social locations, and the combination of commercial and governmental agencies (Howell, 2008). As places of individual and cultural cultivation, skateparks provide a valuable creative space in communities (Howell, 2008).

Adolescent development is essential to the individual and entrepreneurial cultivation of individuals and communities, with skateparks playing a pivotal role. "Despite polarized attitudes to skateparks, park users reported levels of personal adjustment and social integration similar to those of other adolescents" (Bradley, 2010, p. 288). Graham Bradley investigates this theory by examining the extent and nature of skatepark usage and the factors encouraging park usage (2010).

Accordingly, the psychological outcomes associated with the activity and subculture is examined along with changes that can be made to improve and broaden the usage of parks effecting social outcomes in a positive manner (Bradley, 2010). Through interviews, camaraderie, and affiliation with skating, a positive influence is found assisting young individuals gain self-confidence and a sense of identity (Bradley, 2010). Furthermore, observation and general discussion provide a lens to view several positive learning opportunities and experiences being linked to the usage of skateparks (Bradley, 2010). Finally, the belief in which only supervised and structured leisure leads to favorable developmental outcomes is contradicted through findings in the links between "unstructured" activities that occur within skateparks, opportunities for challenge and focused tasks, meaningful identity development, and broad social integration (Bradley, 2010).

Under the scope of adolescent development is the need for community spaces in the realm of social utility and functionality in the form of skateparks through the lens of skateboarders (Taylor & Khan, 2011). In examining this premise, research is needed to determine if skateparks meet the physical and social needs for users (Taylor & Khan, 2011). Furthermore, adding to this scope, how do skaters perceive the functionality of the parks, their adequacy, and how could they be improved (Taylor & Khan, 2011). Consequently, examining these questions through quantitative data and observations, reveal skater enjoyment, peak adrenaline, and social acceptance through the lens of a skatepark (Taylor & Khan, 2011). Additionally, participants feel the culture presents an overwhelming sentiment of importance, leading to fulfillment in their lives (Taylor and Khan, 2011). Finally, skateparks provide a place to socially engage with like-minded individuals, create social peer acceptance, camaraderie, and a common view of the unjust stereotype received from societal norms (Taylor & Khan, 2011).

Recently a push to erase the unjust perception of skateboarding to one of social respectability has been seen by the increase of incorporation into commercial and governmental processes (Lombard, 2010). Through the incorporation into mainstream culture, a theme of resistance resonates throughout the skateboarding community (Lombard, 2010). Moreover, themes of resistance are found throughout the subculture and can be pinpointed to smaller details such as some locations requiring helmets. Although helmets are an argument for safety, skateboarders view helmets from the perspective of participant while governments view the controversy as accountability (O'Conner, 2016). Furthermore, helmet use has been argued as a form of resistance from both sides as skateboarding is further integrated culture (O'Conner, 2016). The helmet conflict is observed through ethnographic participation with skaters and observation of governmental policies. Additionally, a majority of skaters feel justified resistance from helmet enforcement (O'Conner, 2016). Finally, resistance comes from the everyday skater to the top professionals, such as with skater's businessmen Jamie Thomas and Ed Templeton who disagree with the integration into mainstream culture because, in spite of personal profitability through integration, they oppose corporate interpretation (Lombard, 2010).

In his exploration of *Urban Governance*, *Recreation Space*, and the *Cultivation of Personal Responsibility* in skateparks, Ocean Howell highlights "how the skatepark can be viewed as an instance in which neoliberal governance practices have reconfigured the citizen-state relationship from one of entitlement to one of contractualism" (Howell, 2008, p. 475). Moreover, analyzing this boom through the lens of urban governance and community need, he observes that with no dedicated locations to skateboard, the participants use parking lots, schools, streets, and paved ditches to practice. Consequently, governmental urban managers began building skateparks not only in response to popularity and minor damage control demands, but also have more complex

motivations (Howell, 2008). Additionally, skateboarding is an active lifestyle, promoting creativity, perseverance, and a self-sufficient creative community. "Urban managers view skateparks as a means by which to reward and encourage specific character traits in young people, principally personal responsibility, self-sufficiency, and entrepreneurialism" (Howell, 2008, p. 476). Finally, an excellent example of this viewpoint is Jamie Thomas, a professional skater and San Diego entrepreneur of the year, credited his success of personal and entrepreneurial cultivation to skateboarding (Howell, 2008).

Governmental and cultural acceptance of gentrification in urban areas is impacting growth of individual and cultural cultivation. Communities, skaters, and governments should be cognizant of gentrification situations, such as John F. Kennedy Plaza, Love Park, in Philadelphia (Howell, 2005). Love Park with a rich and resonant skateboarding history, has garnered local government, community, media, and architectural praises (Howell, 2005). Moreover, through the public eye, skateboarding in Love Park has tempered the homeless population, injected industry capital, and given a hip-hop image to the city (Howell, 2005). Gentrification, as exemplified by Love Park, is an example of how bohemian and countercultural movements have become a conduit for the institutionalization of urban areas (Howell, 2005). In 2002, Philadelphia went too great measures to block park skateboarding (Howell, 2005). Resisting petitions and proposed donations, the city refused to eliminate the ban even as skateboarding continued to thrive in the community and park (Howell, 2005). Finally, the park remained closed to skateboarding until 2016 when the park was closed for renovation and development. The city of Philadelphia and Love Park is a culminating example of skateparks generating creative space environments cultivating personal and community growth through renovation and development.

Creating and Producing the Documentary

Creating and producing the documentary project involved an immense amount of research, a systematic scope of work applying filming, audio recording, subject immersion, observation and editing into a revealing view of the society, place and culture of the objective source of Burnside. Hongisto's 2015 Soul of the Documentary. Framing, Expression, Ethics is an invaluable resource for the production aspects of the project. The dissertation Soul of the Documentary covers many valuable planning assets for the creation of any documentary. The documentary framing process is covered in-depth throughout the dissertation, showing the importance and process of not only how to frame questions but also the picture during the creative development of the project. Additionally, the ethics and morality of interviewing and filming are thoroughly revealed, describing how to properly conduct documentary questioning and the sensitive filming process. Furthermore, the dissertation describes and explains the importance of expression through film, illustrating to the documenter how to create expression through a topic, and how to express the views of those involved in the subject of the documentary.

Extensive research of the subject matter, revealed far-reaching individual and community culture connections to run fervent and deep under the bridge at Burnside. In the late eighties and early nineties, difficulties with authorities were the norm for young skateboarders, due to illegal skateboarding practices. In contrast, through the building Burnside Skatepark, the same select group of young skaters chased out vagrants, drug dealers, and related crime, creating a safe haven for themselves from illegal skating situations while developing their own community. Furthermore, through adversity with city government and developers attempting to dismantle the park for their own purposes, the participants have become an even tighter community. As evidence of the participant's unique camaraderie and determination to protect their community, the group

created a Burnside Skatepark non-profit organization in 2011. Additionally, founding members went on to create three of the most sought after skatepark construction companies in the world, Dreamland Skatepark, Grindline Skateparks, and Evergreen Skateparks. These companies combined have built numerous concrete skateparks across the world.

Culture involves the collective art and manifestations of human intellectual achievement. Burnside has created a community of its' own, a place where the friendships made have lasted for thirty years and where most participants consider one another family. Moreover, on any given day, the park reveals new and old camaraderie relationships amongst skaters through a family atmosphere with food either being dropped off, grilled or a park BBQ happening. A sense of achievement with the ever-new line skated or trick learned develops prideful accomplishment in all those attending and/or participating. The park is a creative achievement unto itself, with Burnside's influence seen in parks throughout the world owing to specific features first created under the bridge. Additionally, Jay Meer directs the vast mural painting, which change frequently at the park and must go through approval by the board. Currently, although an immense ocean scene exists complete with mermaids, sharks, shipwrecks, a deep-sea diver, and fish, this pleasing mural and will soon be repainted for the annual anniversary party.

Though Burnside's influences are many, most prominently is the impact of the park on Sage Bolyard. Throughout his almost thirty years of creating under the bridge, the park provided him with a catalyst for his path to his life today. Consequently, he serves as the President of the Board, attends numerous council meetings throughout the city, and successfully coordinates the park into city gentrification; by working with the Burnside Bridge retrofit committee and Yard (eco-living condos) developers and owners. Additionally, he worked as a founding member of Dreamland Skateparks, founded Grindline Skateparks, has traveled the world building parks, and since has

gone on to found a successful commercial concrete construction company. Most prominently, above career and friends, Burnside has provided Sage with family. Through the park he met his wife and has two children, ages 13 and 16, with all skating at the location on a weekly basis. When visiting the park with Sage, respect and awe can be seen for the man who continues to fight for the park through meetings and repairs.

Conclusion

Although formulation of plans and timelines for the project attempted to take into account unexpected delays and events, there were numerous aspects that could have been improved. First and foremost is time. While pleased with the final product, after doing research, this is a project that could be worked on over the course of a year, especially to allow for more footage filtering. interviews, and edit time. Additionally, shooting video footage with an updated 4K full frame cinema camera, concentrating shotgun microphone, and time to shoot footage would have been optimal but was financially not feasible. Numerous members of the park do not schedule, as the open nature of the park has always determined when participants arrived within the suitability of their own schedule, due to this, additional time would be helpful in better time management connections with the loose schedules as regards to the park and interviewing. Further funding for frequent research travel from the University would also be a valuable asset to promote being able to financially achieve the overall goal. Finally, after building a rapport with the subjects, a brief interview training period for dialogue participants, would have greatly reduced audio edit time. Regardless of the equipment used, time constraints, and financial limitations, overall the outcome of the project has been exceptionally rewarding and overwhelmingly received by documentary participants. From Burnside member's requests to expand the project to release publically,

encourages this documenter to spending more time editing to achieve a more comprehensive fluid product for Burnside as well as to find a future in documentary production.

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