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It seems almost too obvious to say that houses constitute the city. They are the building blocks from which the city is made, their inhabitants are its citizens. Yet house and city are habitually treated as separate realms: the private and the public, the domestic and the civic, *oikos* and *polis*.[1] The fraught relationship between housing and the city – the ways in which the inhabitation of the home is also involvement in the city, however circumscribed that involvement may be – is the focus of this special issue of *Architecture and Culture*.

Many, though not all, of the essays collected here are developed from papers delivered at the conference "Housing and the City," the seventeenth international conference of the Architectural Humanities Research Association, hosted by the Department of Architecture and Built Environment at the University of Nottingham in 2020. The conference took place during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic. The public events associated with it – those scheduled to take place beyond the university, such as dinners, urban walks, and other convivialities – were abandoned, and the conference sessions were held online. People spoke from their homes, interrupted by the demands of children, pets, cooking and other domestic inevitabilities.[2] The juxtaposition of private and public was immediate and stark.[3]

The pandemic also made visible the often-tenuous workings of the city. The relationships – dependencies and disjunctions – between what were deemed "essential" or "key" workers and services and the lives and lifestyles they support was thrown into sharp relief.[4] The solidarities we rely on, and the inequalities that we often fail to acknowledge, became more apparent. Connections between the domestic, the urban and the global were made manifest.

Against this backdrop, the question that lay behind the conference, of what it means to be at home in the city of the twenty-first century, took on a particular potency. We sought, not to answer it directly, but to investigate the genealogy of ideas and assumptions that are caught up in the notion of housing and its relationship to the city. We understood housing to be a distinct category emerging from the need, identified toward the end of the nineteenth century, to house first "workers," then "the people" or "the masses."[5] Posited in this way, housing appeared in conjunction with the notion of "the urban," a way of conceiving of the city as a nexus within a broad field of processes – processes that might variously be conceived spatially, socially, economically or administratively.[6] Inquiries into how to ensure the order and productivity of the population, and thus its welfare, even its happiness – into how to optimize the productive potential of individuals in families and communities – were central to the urbanism of the first half of the twentieth century. Housing became a key component in urbanism's strategies, its inhabitants viewed as urban subjects. In this way, the public and the private, the individual and the collective, were understood not as opposing concepts so much as specific constructions used to link the urban subject to the spatial, social and economic organization of the city-as-urban-field, positioning the subject in relation to the urban in specific ways.

Our contention is that the recasting of the city as the urban, and the focus on housing as a constitutive component within it, has also recast the ways in which we act politically. The relationship between inhabitant and city has been rendered indirect, understood through generalization rather than individual action, as Hannah Arendt argues forcefully in *The Human Condition*.[7] It is the nature of this link between self, house, housing and the city, the inequities it perpetuates and the strategies and tactics it allows, that the papers published here explore.[8] While the essays have diverse epistemological approaches and draw on different cultural and historical contexts, they share an understanding that the way housing is conceived, legislated for and occupied raises questions about who we are as subjects or citizens, what our role within the city might be. Wary of architecture's insistent optimism that housing can help shape individuals and communities for the better, the papers focus less on housing as an object than on the assumptions on which it relies.[9] They look not so much at the formal properties of housing projects as at what they do, probing the often uneasy relationship

between policies, planning processes, built spaces, and the inhabitation that takes place.

Mark Campbell's front matter for this special issue shows two still images taken from his film "Imagining the City – Dai Shan, Jiangsu Province, People's Republic of China" (2017-2020) in which the disjunction between housing policy and urban life is immediately visible. In the first image, a jacket, hanging up to dry on a rooftop balcony in the foreground, gestures towards two run down, well used apartment buildings in the middle distance. They frame a perspective view of rows of towers of apartments, tall, alienating and empty, a bleak background to the gently waving jacket. Dai Shan is a dormitory town built at speed to house a population that never arrived. Political disagreements, administrative re-ordering, economic vicissitudes and the lack of a direct rail connection to the neighboring city of Nanjing have largely preserved its pristine state. Its few older buildings house work teams that are being phased out. In the second image, we have a bird's eye view down a broad avenue lined by the same tall towers. It takes a while to realize that winter has given way to summer. Trees and shops at ground level indicate the potential for a street life, but none is visible. The film stills arrest not life, but its absence. Taking time to show us what is not there, not happening, the images make us acutely aware of our expectations of a city's workings.

The first essay in the issue is Anna Minton's "From Gentrification to Sterilization? Building on *Big Capital*." A development of the keynote lecture she gave at the conference, it studies the processes, economic and political, that have led to what she argues should be identified as the sterilization of large parts of London, again depriving it of life.[10] Minton returns to the account of the city's housing crisis given in her book *Big Capital* of 2017 to describe how, in the UK, the assumption that we have a right to a home was conflated in the 1980s with the right to own a home, leading to a model for the financialization of mass housing that turned it unequivocally into a commodity.[11] The financial crash of 2008, itself housing related, and the pumping of money into the economy through Quantitative Easing to alleviate its effects on the flow of investment, encouraged an influx of private money into the housing market at every level. "Social housing" has been redeveloped as luxury apartments. Rather than "trickling down" to those on lower incomes, the effect of investment, whether from individuals or private equity companies, has been to render London's housing increasingly unaffordable to all but the rich and the super-rich. Further QE introduced through Covid has exacerbated these processes. Former inhabitants are displaced; vibrant and diverse neighborhoods are replaced with "homogenous, sterile and often empty luxury apartments encased within privatized developments in hollowed out parts of the city."[12] More radical than gentrification, this sterilization empties places of the possibility of regeneration.

Matt Reynold's paper, "Downstairs, Upstairs: The Division of Domestic Space Between Domestic Workers and Super-Rich Employers in

London," investigates the way in which these sterile spaces are inhabited. Reynolds combines a close examination of planning documents for the buildings on Eaton Square, one of London's most expensive addresses, with a study of survey data from a charity that supports and advocates for domestic workers, to discover an erasure of privacy for those domestic workers at the same time as they are denied a public presence. He looks at the way in which the buildings themselves – part of the development of West London in the first half of the nineteenth century – have been recently altered to promote this denial of rights, whether Henri Lefebvre's "right to the city" or the "right to privacy" of the European Convention on Human Rights.[13] Acknowledging that the super-rich employers are almost as invisible as their employees, largely detached from "politics, public space and public culture,"[14] Reynolds interviews their proxies – architects and planning officers – to learn about the tactics used. He calls for all of us, at a policy, professional or personal level, to engage with what such rights actually mean, both for individuals and for the making of the city.

Reynold's paper makes clear that there is often a chasm between being at home and occupying a house, and that how we occupy a house is closely bound up with how we occupy, or take part in, a city. This relationship between privacy and communal life, between self and city, is addressed directly by Sabrina Puddu in her study of "The 'Prison House' and Normalization, Between the Reassertion of Privacy and the Risk of Collectiveness." Puddu makes an explicit connection between experiments in penology – in prison management – and those in co-habitation or co-living. Her research into "prison houses," usually transition houses between full-scale prisons and domestic homes in "free" society, shows that the process of normalization these houses are intended to engender produces a carefully choreographed and edited idea of the collective. In purporting to emulate so-called normal life, they re-order it to minimize risk, conflict and complexity. Puddu's concern is that these houses come themselves to provide models for collective living beyond the prison service, and that collective life is then similarly simplified and reproduced throughout the city.

Puddu's argument, based on close critical study of three such "prison houses" in Denmark and Belgium, draws attention to the fact that all experiments in housing are experiments in mediating between the self and the collective – between the cell or bedroom, the kitchen, and life outside, with the family, or a family substitute, as an intermediate construct. Her paper is followed here by Savia Palate's study of the Family Houses Project, an experimental scheme in East London built in the early 1960s by the UK's Ministry for Housing and Local Government. The project explored the implications – social, economic and architectural – of the same Ministry's 1961 Parker Morris Report into the spatial requirements for the "inter-relation" between the needs of "social, family and individual lives" in a society that was perceived to be changing rapidly.[15]

The Report was officially entitled *Homes for Today and Tomorrow*. Its authors identified an erosion of class distinctions and a shift toward a society in which, as Ruth Glass would put it, "the luxuries of yesterday … have become the necessities of today for large sections of the population."[16] Their remit was to consider "the standards of design and equipment applicable to family dwellings and other forms of residential accommodation" for these changing conditions.[17] Palate's "*Homes for Today and Tomorrow*: Britain's Parker Morris Standards and the West Ham Experimental Scheme" explores the way in which standards are simultaneously normalizing and aspirational, based both on what people do, and what they might – or ought to – want to do. She shows how the aim of the Parker Morris standards to allow for greater individual freedom through spatial flexibility came to render the experimental Family Houses Project a didactic tool that tried to orchestrate relationships between individual, family and community. Palate suggests that the Report's ultimately deterministic understanding of what freedom should entail, and how it might encourage the new society into being, was one of the reasons for the short-lived adoption of its recommendations (its standards were eventually made law for new council housing in the UK in 1969, then abolished in 1980).

The families assigned to the Family Houses Project were carefully selected from a list of applicants. They were interviewed twice by the "Sociological Section" of the Ministry's Design and Research Group, first during the design process, then a year after they had moved in. The interviewees were the housewives, who were asked a series of pre-determined questions about how they occupied first their old, then their new homes; their answers were used to establish the layout of the houses and then to assess the success of the scheme. For Heidi Svenningsen Kajita, consultation with the occupants is itself part of what potentially makes housing "social." Her paper, "Urgent Minor Matters: Re-Activating Archival Documents for Social Housing Futures," studies the process that emerged during the Byker redevelopment in Newcastle, UK, a large-scale slum clearance project built between 1969 and 1971, a few years after the Family Houses Project, and according to Parker Morris rules. The architects, Ralph Erskine's Arkitektkontor, established a site office where Byker's residents were invited to come in and chat as soon as demolition and rebuilding began. Erskine described the residents as "consumer clients," urban subjects with consumer choice, whose voices and concerns were as important as those of any of the other parties involved, whether individual or institutional.

Svenningsen Kajita immerses herself in the architects' archives, both in the UK and in Sweden, and repeatedly wanders through the estate. Looking at scribbles on drawings (that mention the position of a dining table or provide window measurements for curtains), lists of residents' complaints (children playing loudly on insufficiently private stairs), and other notes and scraps that survive from the site office, she

bumps into and talks with one of the architects in Stockholm. In Byker, she strikes up conversations with those who live there now. She spends time in the communal lounge of the sheltered housing for the elderly, gently provoking gossip by mentioning what her archival rummaging has unearthed. Her aim is not to provide a historical overview of the building of new Byker, nor to identify moments of cause and effect between design and modes of inhabitation – she shows how agreement was frequently not quite reached, and how residents' "reproductions of space" are very different from architects' versions. Instead, she simply "attends" to the voices of Byker's inhabitants, listening, and validating the ongoing involvement of these urban subjects in the production of their homes and their community.[18]

In her search for the "social" in what has come to be called "social housing," Svenningsen Kajita does not simply report on the consultation process established by Erskine and Arkitektkontor, she seeks to perpetuate it.[19] In Byker, society was and – with care – can continue to be constituted by the active participation of all those integral to making and re-making this part of the city, whether inhabitants or outsiders, and however messy that participation may be. We should no doubt remember Arendt's admonition that "the social" has come to usurp the public and the political – that (as Puddu and Palate have shown) "society expects from each of its members a certain kind of behavior, imposing innumerable and various rules, all of which tend to 'normalize' its members, … to exclude spontaneous action … ."[20] Social housing is certainly implicated in this, just as urbanism tends to render the city a matter of bureaucracy, in a continuum of control. Yet Svenningsen Kajita's re-activation of the archives and the banter and disagreement she encounters indicate the ongoing negotiation that is involved in Byker; she sees not merely efficient management, but an attempt, however hesitant, to render society a polity.

Disagreement and negotiation are prominent again in the study carried out by Youcao Ren and Jan Woudstra in an area of China that is being rapidly urbanized. In "Between Fengshui and Neighbors: Case Studies of Participant-Led House-Making in Rural East China," Ren accompanies a fengshui practitioner as he helps address conflicts between householders in two villages, one of them relatively untouched by urban encroachment, the other being rapidly subsumed by the prefectural town of Wuyi in Zhejiang province. Both villages were built by their inhabitants in the 1970s and operated until recently as largely independent communities. Since the beginning of the new millennium, Chinese central government has been attempting to redress some of the inequalities between urban and rural areas, using top-down policies that pay little heed to local differences. In bringing infrastructure and industry to formerly isolated places, the government is gradually reconstructing many of these self-build villages, replacing their houses with standardized housing blocks. Fengshui, which was banned as an

anachronistic practice between the 1950s and the late 1970s, is being revived here not just as a way to build auspiciously, but as a way to address conflicts between neighbors whose still-existing plots of land are increasingly squeezed. Ren and Woudstra show how the fengshui practitioner works as an arbitrator, listening to people's concerns and making proposals to address them that can be sanctioned through shared rituals. Fengshui becomes, as they put it, a kind of "cultural glue."[21]

Neither Svenningsen Kajita nor Ren and Woudstra try to make generalized claims for the resident participation or conflict resolution that they study, to turn it into a method. Their approach is ethnographic: they observe attentively, listen, and describe, aware that drawing attention to what they witness is important itself in validating these practices. Attending to the negotiations involved in inhabitation is central, too, to Jiawen Han's paper, but Han's study is a historical one, and her concern is to identify not so much the practices themselves as an affective mood that is generated by them. "Shanghai Ladies and *Lilong* Housing: The Feminine Scene Permeating Urban Shanghai" seeks to make palpable an atmosphere or "spirit" that that spread through and animated the city's way of life in the first half of the twentieth century – an atmosphere that emerged, suggests Han, from the tightly packed residential neighborhoods where space was always contested.

Han reads novels by Shanghai's pioneering women writers of the time. She considers both their authors and their female characters, asking where and how plots and specific scenes took shape. Linking the novels to architectural histories and extant neighborhoods, she focuses on the *lilong* or *longtang*, dense terraces of housing built on narrow lanes which characterized the rapidly developing city from the late nineteenth century to the 1940s. The books Han studies were called "*tingzijian* literature," the *tingzijian* being a small bedroom on a half landing at the back of each house, often rented out to increase family incomes. The room overlooked the lane, filled with laundry, kitchen smells and gossip. Lodgers might be young women trying to make a living (by whatever means), impoverished writers, perhaps budding revolutionaries. From their vantage point, they could observe the activities in the lane, or slip out through the back door to wander or join in.

Han describes how *tingzijian* women, whether writers or their characters, watching or being watched, used the specificities of their domestic situation to formulate an understanding of themselves as modern urban women, capable of participating fully in the life of the city. Here, a specific version of domesticity helped to engender a new kind of society, a new urbanity. In her short piece "Housing and Domesticity," the end matter to this special issue, Lilian Chee argues that it is domesticity, the bodily inhabitation of housing's spaces, with its repetitions, its rhythms, its deliberations and dramas, that makes housing more than mere infrastructure, and gives it its significance.

Chee shows two film stills from "03-FLATS," a film she made with director Lei Yuan Bin, which provide an echo of and a counter to Campbell's frontmatter images from Dai Shan. In the first, two blocks in one of Singapore's vast government-built housing estates tower over a diminutive-looking "green space." Sixteen or more layers of identical flats are stacked one above the other. It is dusk. A few lights in windows indicate inhabitation. The image is banal and familiar – these flats could be anywhere. In the second, we are inside one of the flats, squeezed against a desk overloaded with papers, pens and trinkets. Behind the desk is a wall covered with sketches and photos, collaged and jostling not for display but for thinking, for working with and through. The flat's occupant crouches, caught between desk and wall; she is busy taping up a large drawing sheet, appropriating what is left of the wall as a canvas for more investigation, more working through. Domesticity here is not just repetitive labor, it is the building of a world. Chee tells us that Singapore's so-called public housing was not conceived for this kind of inhabitant, a single woman. The majority of Singapore's population live in HDBs, or public housing schemes, yet single people are not eligible to apply for a flat until they are over thirty-five. As infrastructural provision, housing is aligned with family policy. For Chee, it is the occupation of housing by domesticity, familial or otherwise, which "jams open the infrastructural space of housing with desires, tactics and spontaneity."[22]

In this issue of *Architecture and Culture,* the accumulation of critique, unease and optimism about housing is a questioning of the way in which housing constitutes the city – that is, of how it is political. There is a definition of politics that concerns governance and policy – in this case policies concerning how much housing to build and where, what form it should take, how it should be funded, who is given access to it, how it should be run. Arendt argues that this is not in fact politics so much as household management taking place at a national scale, the result of an "unnatural growth of the natural" in which life's necessities have come to subsume everything.[23] To try to control it is simply to dominate nature. As Puddu, Palate and Chee make clear, from governments' point of view housing is indeed part of the household management of the nation, part of their attempt to control the natural behavior of the nation's subjects.

A second definition of politics is that it is something that takes place in public – and here Arendt would agree. In this definition, housing is seen as the locus from which private individuals emerge to become public, potentially political citizens. This is what the domestic laborers Reynolds identifies are denied, or what Han's "Shanghai ladies" find a way to do. In this definition, that which is not public is demoted, rendered of little importance. As Edwina Attlee confirms in her recent book *Strayed Homes*, there is a "quiet sexism and classism at work in these categories [of public and private]" which links "privacy … to reproductive and unpaid labour, to … a certain kind of invisibility," and which "needs to be aired and worked out."[24]

The airing and working out of these categories are the tasks the papers gathered here take on. The proposition that inhabitation, or domesticity, is itself a political act is what, in their different ways, they develop. If Arendt's strict association of the house with deprivation and privacy might seem unhelpful once house has become housing, and once we are uncomfortable with the relegation of some to the status of non-citizen, her account of what it is to be part of the *polis*, the city, is enlightening. For Arendt, to be part of the city is to speak and to act, and to act is always to interact, to reveal ourselves among others. We become who we are by speaking with and engaging with others – always with uncertainty, sometimes with fear, and sometimes with courage. "Who" we are is not a fixed goal, but a risk. We do not know who we will turn out to be.[25] This speaking and acting is the negotiation described by Sveninngsen-Kajita at Byker, or enabled by the fengshui practitioner in Ren and Woudstra's Zhejiang. To be able to speak and to act among others is the freedom of being political, of being of the city. Without it, neither cities nor citizens can take on an identity – cities are instead the sterile places Campbell shows and Minton describes.

Through bringing these papers together, we have come to understand the many different levels at which housing constitutes the city. Housing might indeed have private spaces within it, spaces contained within the city where we can for a moment avoid the risk of interaction and be shielded from having to engage, though few places are completely detached from the public realm – and no-one should be relegated to them. Housing is also something that is produced – fabricated and legislated for – and can be reproduced; in being made, it creates what Arendt might call a world, relatively stable and durable, in which interaction is possible.[26] Most importantly, housing is that place of spontaneous engagement with and among others, an engagement that is uneasy and unpredictable over issues that might seem messy, minor or mundane – an engagement which is itself the city.

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Diana Periton teaches in the School of Architecture and Cities at the University of Westminster. Her research studies the development of the discipline of urbanism in the early twentieth century, particularly in France, asking what urbanism's various practitioners understood a city to be. She is a founding editor of *Architecture and Culture*, first published in 2013.

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Notes

1. For a discussion of this separation, see Gülsüm Baydar, "Spectral Returns of Domesticity," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 21 (2003): 27–45.

2. The "Housing and the City" AHRA conference in Nottingham was attended by 220 delegates, from 23 different countries.

3. At the time, this juxtaposition of public and private, or perhaps it was a collapse of the terms into each other, was unfamiliar, unexpected. We have since become used to the resulting exposure, which Jean Baudrillard might call an "ecstasy of communication" – see Baudrillard, "The Ecstasy of Communication," in *Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 130–131.

4. "[P]eople in work that is not 'key' talk about how nice it is working from home, not having to commute, and people in key work keep going to work. Relationships to home and to the services that surround and make home possible are shifting", wrote Edwina Attlee in her book *Strayed Homes* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 176, completed at much the same time as the conference took place.

5. For a discussion of the emergence of mass housing as a category, see Miles Glendinning, *Mass Housing: Modern Architecture and State Power – A Global History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), Introduction and Part I.

6. It is not incidental that the first attempts to define urbanism as a discipline appear in the early twentieth century – see, for instance, the founding of Town Planning Institute in England in 1914, or of the first school of urban studies in France, Paris' Ecole des Hautes Etudes Urbaines, in 1919. The transition in Lefebvre's terms from "the right to the city" (*Le droit à la ville*, Paris: Seuil, 1968) to his focus on "the urban" in *La révolution urbaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970) has influenced our use of the two terms, the city and the urban.

7. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

8. We refer here to Michel de Certeau's distinction between strategy and tactic in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (London, Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), xix. A strategy is a system of control, of institutionalised power, while a tactic is a practice of everyday life by which we can avoid being engulfed by strategies, even if only for a moment.

9. A selection of papers from the conference that were more directly concerned with housing as built form can be found in *Housing and the City*, eds. Katharina Borsi, Didem Ekici, Jonathan Hale and Nick Haynes (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022).

10. Anna Minton's keynote, "Big Capital: Who is London For?" was delivered online on November 19, 2020.

11. Anna Minton, *Big Capital: Who Is London For?* (London: Penguin, 2017).

12. See Anna Minton's essay in this issue, "From Gentrification to Sterilization? Building on *Big Capital*," *Architecture and Culture,* vol. 10, no. 3: 387–407.

13. Henri Lefebvre, *Le droit à la ville*, translated by Eleonore Koffman and Elizabeth Lebas in *Writings on Cities* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 1996), chapters 2–17; Article Eight of the European Convention on Human Rights, https://www.echr.coe.int/documents/convention_eng.pdf (accessed August 2022).

14. William Davies, "Elites without Hierarchies: Intermediaries, 'Agency' and the Super-Rich," in *Cities and the Super-Rich: Real Estate, Elite Practices, and Urban Political Economies,* edited by Ray Forrest et al. (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 34–35, quoted by Matt Reynolds in this issue.

15. *Homes for Today and Tomorrow* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1961), 4.

16. Ruth Glass, *London: Aspects of Change*, edited by the Centre for Urban Studies (London: McGibbon and Kee, 1964), xiv.

17. *Homes for Today and Tomorrow*, iv.

18. See Heidi Svenningsen Kajita's article in this issue, "Urgent Minor Matters: Re-Activating Archival Documents for Social Housing Futures," *Architecture and Culture,* vol. 10, no. 3: 483–511.

19. Miles Glendinning notes that the names given to mass housing vary "not only between languages but between countries" (*Mass Housing*, Introduction). In the UK, housing that by the 1960s had come to be called "council housing" – housing built by local government – is now a specific type of "social housing" – housing provided at reduced rents. It would be interesting to know when each of these terms came into use; "public housing" does not seem to have been an official label in the UK, though it, too, is used.

20. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 40.

21. See Youcao Ren and Jan Woudstra's article in this issue, "Between Fengshui and Neighbors: Case Studies of Participant-Led House-Making in Rural East China," *Architecture and Culture,* vol. 10, no. 3: 512–533.

22. See Lilian Chee's end matter to this issue, "Housing and Domesticity," *Architecture and Culture,* vol. 10, no. 3, 554–558.

23. Arendt, op. cit., 47. 45-47 ff.

24. Attlee, op. cit. 171. We have paraphrased the words Attlee takes issue with. They are used by John Allan in describing architect Berthold Lubetkin's emphasis on the articulation of entrance porches, lift lobbies, staircases, etc.: "those moments at which the private individual becomes a public citizen" (John Allan, *Berthold Lubetkin*, *Architecture and the Tradition of Progress*, London: RIBA Publications, 1992, 379). Attlee enjoys the architecture but is concerned by the way in which "citizen" applies only to those who have been able to "become" public.

25. Arendt, op. cit., 179 ff.

26. Ibid, 137.

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