



Participatory Management – A brief guideline for water managers

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Content

1	Who is the target audience for this guideline?.....	3
2	Introduction	3
2.1	Integration and uncertainty	3
2.2	Type of participatory process: public participation or stakeholder participation?	4
2.3	Expert knowledge and lay knowledge	4
3	Preparation phase	5
3.1	Co-planning or expert planning?.....	5
3.2	Goals and limitations	5
3.3	Problem identification	6
3.4	Stakeholder identification	6
3.5	Communication	7
3.6	Tasks and resources.....	7
3.7	Monitoring a participatory process.....	8
3.8	Designing a participatory plan	8
4	First interactive phase (information provision, knowledge elicitation).....	9
4.1	Information provision	9
4.2	Surveys and interviews	10
4.3	First Meeting (IR, p34-36).....	10
4.4	Analysis of the public meeting or related activities respectively	11
5	Second interactive phase	12
5.1	Working with models and scenarios.....	13
6	Final event	13
	Related documents:.....	13

1 Who is the target audience for this guideline?

This guideline may be of interest for any practitioners who have responsibility in water management and planning projects that need to include the public or stakeholders. Practitioners may be water managers or planners from governmental institutions such as ministries, regional authorities and municipalities, or from professional planning offices or consultancies. The theme of the planning project, however, does not stringently need to be related to water. Urban planning, infrastructure or similar projects can take advantage of this guideline. This document is an attempt to provide practitioners with a guideline how to prepare, monitor, conduct and implement a participatory process in a chronological way as much as possible. However, there is no static 'cookbook' since the planning theme and scope, the problems at stake, the legal situation, cultural particularities may vary between cases.

2 Introduction

Planning projects that are publicly relevant are often complex and difficult to manage. Many issues and problems must be co-ordinated with the interests of a number of affected and involved parties. Planners have to deal with the requirements of superior authorities, legal constraints, existing land use patterns, available resources and a top of that the interests of affected groups and individuals.

A planning project such as broadening a channel, building a new pumping station, building a new water basin, improving a sewage system or enlarging a recreational area can be a significant modification on the targeted physical and social environment. We can simplify this environment to 1) the **physical component**: *land use* including its properties, values and functions. This can even be more reduced to the for the planning process most significant criteria such as channel width, pumping capacity, modified groundwater level, a newly designed cycle path, newly planted trees and many more; and 2) the **social component**: individuals and groups (in the literature often named *actors* or summarized as *social entities*) with specific perspectives and interests related to the problems at stake. We have to distinguish between the public, with general interest on some issues of the project, and stakeholder who are directly affected and have particular interest in the issues and outcomes of a project.

2.1 Integration and uncertainty

The fact that the modification of our physical environment may entail social consequences or reveal at least a variety of existing or emerging perspectives and interests on the entire project appears to be an additional source of confusion and uncertainty. There are basically two solutions: 1) ignore it and trust the experts. Then, we do not need a participatory process, and must deal with social consequences later on; 2) incorporate the various perspectives on the project, trying to deal with it in a participatory process. The incorporation of domain knowledge both from stakeholders and the public should be seen as supplement and support rather than pure

opposition. If there is a strong declination against the project, then planners and decision makers should seriously reconsider the plans. Throughout a participatory process planners have the opportunity to identify possible social and environmental impact, and show consequences of measures to stakeholders. The existence of stakeholder various perspectives reveals that it is wise to integrate planning and implementation of the participatory process from the beginning. Planners, engineers, ecologists and participatory managers should work together as closely as possible for the sake of efficiency as well as the achievement of accepted and sustainable solutions.

2.2 Type of participatory process: public participation or stakeholder participation?

In the IR (p11/12) the notions of *stakeholder participation* and *public participation* are briefly explained. Additionally, it is important to be aware of the knowledge gradient between the public and stakeholders. As a general rule stakeholders are more knowledgeable, better prepared and have a stronger interest in particular issues of a project than the public. This means that planners must take in account what type of participation is applicable. This has implications on the choice of participatory methods. The public might require more educational measures than stakeholders. Meetings require a different design in terms of moderation, number of participants, venue, meeting agenda and other issues. Moreover, planners and participatory managers must be aware that in some projects the public as well as stakeholders might be interested to participate in the same process. And even more complicated: a public participatory process may turn into a stakeholder participation subsequent to the emergence of interest groups. However, when identifying stakeholders and problems planners should be able to anticipate the type of participatory process, and more importantly incorporate that in the design of the participatory plan.

2.3 Expert knowledge and lay knowledge

It is beyond controversy that experts such as engineers, ecologists, economists, urban and rural planners have the expertise to design plans and provide suitable problem-solving solutions for a project. Especially, in the field of water management and flood protection professional knowledge and experience is indispensable. However, experts are human beings and may come to misjudgements or underestimate side effects of their proposed measures. Moreover, our educational system in the industrial world tends to have a positivist approach to problem solving that are often technological fixes or end-of-pipe solutions.

The incorporation of domain knowledge can help to avoid single-track solutions, conflicts due to ignored side effects or a lack of acceptance among stakeholders and the public. Their opinions should be taken seriously, which can help both to increase the acceptance and achieve sustainable solutions. Lay knowledge cannot replace expert knowledge, but it can definitely supplement to proposed solutions. Besides local residents and stakeholders, NGOs have usually valuable knowledge concerning biodiversity, natural and cultural heritage and more issues that are might not be on the agenda of engineers and economists, but are relevant for complex projects. For this reason NGOs should be encouraged to be an active partner in the participatory process.

The analysis of the variety of perspectives, the various fields of expertise and lay knowledge is important,

however, during a participatory process the result of this analysis must be processed and yield results.

Whereas engineers, ecologists and planners are focussed experts, highly specialised in their specific field, a participatory manager must be an interdisciplinary expert. That means those individuals must have a broader interdisciplinary knowledge rather than a deep, specialised knowledge. A participatory manager has to keep the balance between the application of subject area (economy, ecology and social issues) on the one hand and outweighing domain knowledge and expert knowledge on the other.

3 Preparation phase

Before a participative process can start its activities, a sound preparation is required including the analysis of stakeholders, resources and budget as well as setting of the agenda (participatory plan). The course and, at the end, the success of a participatory process depend on these factors. When preparing the process be aware of keeping the balance between a well organised schedule and sufficient flexibility in terms of applying participatory methods. In this section we introduce a number of issues that we hold significant in the preparation phase of the participatory process.

3.1 Co-planning or expert planning?

With **expert planning** we mean a planning procedure where a planning draft is designed by experts (planners, engineers, ecologists, etc.) and displayed to lay people. **Co-planning** is a process where a project idea may emerge among lay people, and is (co) designed by experts and lay people together.

These two planning approaches are often compared accompanied with discussions what the better approach might be. From our point of view, there is no better approach. There is only a suitable approach. If an experienced planning authority can propose a planning draft that is open for discussions with the public and stakeholders, it can be as transparent and adaptive as a planning draft that is developed by a group consisting of experts and lay people. In the case of a co-planning approach planners, however, have to be aware to keep control over the participatory process (IR, p15). Important for both approaches is: take the stakeholders and the public seriously and provide transparency. Beware that co-planning requires a stakeholder identification before a planning draft can be designed. Otherwise, there might be a chance the some groups and individuals are excluded.

If the project is a co-decision approach, start with the problem analysis together with the participating stakeholders. If the project is an expert approach, start with an problem analysis, and subsequently find the relevant stakeholders. In both cases, however, stakeholder as well as problem analyses must be flexible and repetitiv, and should reach into the next phases of the participatory process.

3.2 Goals and limitations

Similar to a communication plan (see 'check list for a communication plan)' goals are a significant guideline for

designing and implementing a participatory process. First of all, there are several types of goals:

1. **goals of the overall project** such as more safety, environmental protection, sustainability, better access to and functionality of recreational areas, better infrastructure and many more. Within these main goals there might be subgoals (e.g. safety may consist of risk decrease and protection increase). Note that goals and sub-goals of stakeholders and the public may significantly differ from the planning objectives of the planning organisation or the consortium. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the goals of all involved stakeholders throughout a participatory process.
2. **goals of the participatory process** such as finding a consensus or compromise, satisfying stakeholders, increasing the reputation of the responsible organisation, finding solutions for measures, detect undesired side effects, a transparent, democratic participatory process and many more.

Goals of the participatory plan usually depend on the overall project goals. At the end the participatory process is supposed to support the project or planning goals. However, do not confuse project goals with the goals of a participatory process.

Goals may be defined by help of the planning organisation's own goals, the goals of the local, regional, national or European governments and of course the goals of stakeholders and lay people. Limitations, that cannot be modified throughout a participatory process may be legal, environmental or budget constraints and limited space. Since budget can be a limitation, it is wise to not only include participation as part of a planning process from the beginning, but also allocate sufficient budget for the participatory process throughout the design phase of the planning process. It is helpful that all involved parties of the participatory process are aware of all the goals and limitations.

3.3 Problem identification

As soon as a first planning draft or concrete ideas of a project are available, the main issues as well as potential problems and side effects that are relevant for the planning from the point of view of the planners should be identified and documented. This helps to avoid surprises when it comes to the first stakeholder meetings.

3.4 Stakeholder identification

There is no universal recipe for a stakeholder identification. However, professional organisations such as water boards and municipalities conduct projects in a well defined area on a regular basis. This implies that there are stakeholders who may frequently be involved. A steering board can be a means to permanently keep in touch with a pool or a partnership of stakeholders. Note, this partnership should always be open for new stakeholders, otherwise new stakeholders might be excluded or feel excluded.

The partnership can serve as a basis for long-term co-operations as well as for specific projects. A higher efficiency can be expected, since not every new project requires a new search and identification of stakeholders. Relevant organisations would be governmental organisations such as regional governments or municipalities, NGOs such as environmental organisations, specific interest groups, etc.. Another advantage is that various

perspectives and interests of those stakeholders can be incorporated in the planning procedure from the beginning, or opinions about new projects can be quickly gathered. An annual stakeholder meeting, for example, with an annual newsletter can help to keep the stakeholders informed and build up trust. Moreover, this pool of stakeholders is able to help identifying new stakeholders in a new project, even those who are not organised.

NGOs and similar interest groups can be valuable partners in projects, since these groups have knowledge about ecological issues such as biodiversity and vulnerability of eco systems, recreational values or similar criteria. We have observed both: NGOs show little interest in projects or they solely oppose, if their values are threatened. On the other hand managers try to avoid NGOs as potential opponents. On the long run a collaboration between NGOs and planning organisations can be beneficial for both sides.

Besides a permanent group of stakeholder a new project might require a search for new stakeholders. In the preparation phase a media and literature study as well as inquiring known stakeholders is most suitable. For more guideline about stakeholder identification, please, refer to the IR, p. 11 (3.4 Definitions: Types of participants).

For both problem analysis as well as stakeholder analysis a survey can be useful. This holds especially for large projects and for regions or neighbourhoods where potential stakeholders are prevailingly unknown.

3.5 Communication

As in the 'Check list for a communication plan' indicated sufficient communication is a crucial premise for a participatory process, however, participation is more than communication. Indeed, a communication plan is helpful for projects that have several instances of planning organisations plus stakeholders. With a communication plan you can assign responsibilities, identify tasks, provide stakeholders and the public with key contacts, keep track of what was said and written, and more. Be aware of the difference between internal communication (within the planning organisation or the consortium of organisations) and the communication between professionals and the public as well as stakeholders. Communication and provision of information is a delicate issue. On both levels of communication provide information equally to all partners, and have the highest possible level of transparency. Otherwise mistrust and irritation among partners may be expected. A communication plan should have a clear objective. Make sure the objectives of the communication plan are compatible to the goals of both the overall project and the participatory process.

Furthermore, communication has various means, and nowadays managers have all electronic devices to communicate with each other and with the public. However, sometimes a simple face-to-face talk can help to build up trust and learn about the interests and concerns of stakeholders. Face-to-face contact can be valuable for stakeholder identification as well as problem identification. Aware, a communication plan is not a participatory plan. It can only be supplement to a participatory plan.

3.6 Tasks and resources

Before the actual participatory process starts, resources and tasks have to be allocated. Usually, funding,

expertise and man power are limited resources. The participatory process must accompany the planning process. If participation both is a vital part of the entire project, and is started at the very beginning, then it should be feasible to allocate resources such as available staff, costs for professional advice, computer capacity, locations for meeting, printing costs etc..

Some methods such as complex models and analysis tools are not always easy to apply, and not everyone knows how to use them. External experts are often helpful, and despite of primary costs, it can help to spare financial resources and increase the level of participatory applications. An estimation of costs and effort of particular methods is given in the inception report in the chapter 'Catalogue of participatory methods, pp. 21 – 49. If particular methods are envisaged, check this chapter to find out whether or not the application of those methods is feasible.

3.7 Monitoring a participatory process

Monitoring and feedback can be supportive for a successful participatory process, and may help to avoid process failure. Therefore, it should be prepared and started as early as possible. We suggest to prepare a planning sheet such as developed in the TRUST project in the beginning of the entire project. This approach serves two purposes: 1) a planning sheet can be seen as a logbook for a project and its participatory process, that helps planners to keep track of all phases of the project; and 2) a regular stakeholder feedback can be planned and incorporated in the process from the beginning. When setting the agenda of the participatory process (participatory plan), try to incorporate dates for monitoring activities. Stakeholder feedback on the participatory process may not be confused with feedback on planning options.

3.8 Designing a participatory plan

Once problem identification, stakeholder identification, goals, resources and a communication plan, are settled, a first draft of a participatory plan, can be designed. Planners are in a dilemma, since stakeholders might expect both a well-set and efficient agenda as well as enough flexibility to incorporate new stakeholder perspectives and eventually newly found criteria and side effects. In other words water managers need an adaptive management agenda both for the entire planning as well as for the participatory process.

However, what may be scheduled beforehand? A number of activities can be planned well ahead:

- Information provision: managers have to choose the means of informing the public and stakeholders such as websites, announcements in newspapers, face-to-face contacts, flyers, posters, etc.;
- Surveys and interviews can help to understand the perspectives and interests of stakeholders and the public;
- First meeting with stakeholders or the public: the main purpose should be providing more information in greater depth and knowledge elicitation. This meeting is important, since it can determine the further course of the project;
- Miscellaneous activities, depending on the results of the first meeting: give space for additional

activities, such as site visits, training for volunteers, popular involvement campaigns (IR, p38), survey (IR, p29-31), or events (IR, p 37);

- Response meeting: This meeting should be used to display the results of knowledge elicitation and consequences of chosen solutions on the physical and social environment, as well as introducing new solutions and discuss them, if necessary;
- Further activities such as workshops, voluntary work, educational activities, etc.
- Determine dates of stakeholder feedback on the participatory process, most efficiently in combination with meetings, surveys and workshops. Note, do not confuse 'stakeholder feedback' on a participatory process with the identification of perspectives and views on the overall planning;
- A final event such as an on-site festivity, a final conference etc.

The first draft of a participatory plan may be accompanied by a first draft of a planning sheet.

4 First interactive phase (information provision, knowledge elicitation)

4.1 Information provision

This step is closely connected to the issue of communication. A sufficient information provision requires a well functioning communication. Information provision is a one way communication where information about a new project is published. **Legally prescribed means of information provision such as an official announcement in the local newspaper or a weekly neighbourhood journal is not sufficient.** The public is overwhelmed with information in their day-to-day life, and repeatedly needs more than one way of information, if you really want to reach them. A comprehensive website is nowadays probably the most suitable way of information provision, and should be used as a basis for all your supplementary information such as brochures and fliers. The website should not be a mere advertisement, but also a detailed and up-to-date provision of planning documents, maps, calendar of (planned) events and any available information that may be published according to your communication plan. For people without internet access there should be a well-known location to view and browse the same documents. Depending on your budget, regular advertisements in conjunction with reference to more detailed information in local media are preferable to flyers and colourful booklets.

Make sure from the first day of information provision, individuals and groups have a chance to react, and even more important, document these reactions. The documentation helps to recognise possible design errors at a very early stage, identify 'difficult stakeholders' and (potential) conflicts.

In the previous years we observed that planners provide the public not with a first and only draft of a plan, but with a number of planning alternatives. This is a step forward towards more flexibility and adaptive water management, but it entails two contradictory problems: 1) a part of the public is confused, and has problems to deal with these alternatives; 2) the public may only choose between the provided alternatives, which introduces a

new inflexibility. One solution might be a very explicit explanation about the variability, and repeatedly ask people whether they are aware of it. Another approach could be to design just one map, indicate the variable elements (e.g. the rivulet can go in front or behind the houses, planners can build two big or five small ponds in the same area, the cycle path can go through a group of trees or around, we can have one big dyke or a smaller dyke and a flood plain, etc.), and have a precise description of the variability of these elements aside of the map. Another way of dealing with variability in your planning is to provide a 3D map, where particular elements can be displaced by stakeholders. This must be documented (e.g. In a stepwise play session or film taping, if the latter is feasible).

Furthermore, the phase 'information provision' can be used to find yet unknown stakeholders and interest groups. As in the section 'communication' indicated, there should be a **central contact address** and person to whom interested new individuals and groups can refer to. This is especially important for large projects and the involvement of more than one planning organisation in a consortium. However, do not wait for stakeholders to approach the planners, conduct an active search in the media such as local newspapers, the internet, etc. Additionally, individual and personal contact 'in the field' is always useful. Onsite work can be efficiently coupled with publicity. Every project employee should be able to communicate with locals, and at least being able to point out relevant people to contact. Besides identifying new stakeholders, this will build up trust and consolidate contacts.

In general all stakeholders must be taken seriously, and diverse perspectives, opinions and interests should be analysed and incorporated the participatory process. Stakeholder perspectives can be used both to avoid design errors and find a best possible solution.

4.2 Surveys and interviews

Planners have to make a decision how knowledge elicitation can be accomplished in the best way. If most stakeholders as well as the current public opinion on relevant issues is known the next step can be a meeting. However, it may be preferable to interrogate the public and/or stakeholders to find out about their view on the relevant issues, before meeting them all together.

The choice of interview and survey methods respectively depends on a number of factors such as the number of respondents, the level of education among stakeholders and the public, the complexity of the questionnaire, etc.. The results may be used in preparation for a meeting and other subsequent participatory methods. An overview about interview and survey methods are described in IR (p 25-31).

4.3 First Meeting (IR, p34-36)

After all available electronic and print media have been employed to inform people, as a next step a public or stakeholder meeting is recommendable for several reasons:

- awareness raising;
- relevant information can be provided in more depth;

- first questions can be answered, misunderstandings can be cleared up;
- yet, unknown stakeholders can be identified (IR, pp 11 -14)
- various perspectives and opinions in relationship to the stakeholders can be identified and categorised;
- side effects, and yet neglected problems or expected problems may be identified;
- opinions about how well information was provided so far can be collected (monitoring).

However, project managers and planners have to decide in which phase of the participatory process a meeting is advisable. Significant indicators may be:

- Is all so far collected information pre-processed and available?
- Is the staff who performs and supervises the meeting appropriately prepared?
- Are all relevant social entities able (and willing) to participate the meeting?
- Can you make sure that social entities wont be excluded from subsequent participatory activities?
- Can eventual mutations such as the transition from public to stakeholder participation be anticipated and handled?

A public meeting must be well prepared, and methods especially for knowledge elicitation, must be thoughtfully selected (for a selection of relevant methods, please refer to the IR, pp 16-20). When applying knowledge elicitation it is crucial to distinguish between asking stakeholders for their knowledge, preferences, and interests about the (desired) state of their environment and preferred measures to be implemented. Furthermore, be very strict in not allowing the repetition of the same or similar statements. Start to categorise statements as early as possible.

Small groups can be handled much easier than larger groups, and a variety of methods is available. For larger group a 'large group response exercise' (IR, p35) is advisable, if you want to achieve comprehensible results.

The performance of a (first) meeting can be trend-setting for the course of the subsequent participatory process. For this reason it is recommendable to consider the support of a professional moderator, if your organisation or consortium dose not have an adequate or neutral enough person, it is wise to employ an external moderator.

Try to collect information about the quality of the meeting and the participatory process so far (monitoring).

Usually, the first meeting is more about becoming acquainted with each other, listening to opinions and starting interactive communication and participation. The meeting itself must have clear goals and provide every involved person with tangible results. One result must be an agenda about how to proceed with the participatory process (a definite participatory plan).

The managers as well as the moderator and professional advisors have to assess whether more sophisticated methods for knowledge elicitation (IR, pp 25 -28) should be applied already in the first meeting. Otherwise, these methods should be applied in subsequent meetings, workshops or surveys.

4.4 Analysis of the public meeting or related activities respectively

This section is especially important, since a thorough and well structured analysis of the meeting and the preceding participatory process is determining for the agenda of the participatory process from now on. At this

point all relevant stakeholders should be known, and a stakeholder analysis can be accomplished (IR, p 13).

All problems, new criteria and new findings must be analysed and categorised.

Further steps depend on the results of this analysis. In other words, this analysis helps the water manager to decide how to proceed from now on. The combination of the aims of the planning procedure and the participatory process provides the manager with a number of options. Here are some examples:

- **Public or Stakeholder participation** (IR, p 11): At this point it should be clear whether a participatory process with stakeholders, the public or a combination of both is the dominating process;
- **Stakeholder categorisation:** After the identification of stakeholders, before or after the first information provision a categorisation of stakeholders (IR, p13-14) is useful. This helps to achieve an overview of relevant stakeholders and distinguishing them according to their perspectives and interests. Especially, when a large number of groups and individuals manifest their interest in the participatory process, it is important to have an overview of stakeholders and their representatives;
- Is the **involvement of volunteers** useful and helpful? If so, this should go into the planning of further participatory activities including coursework, workshops, creative activities, etc.;
- **Consensus or controversy:** this is one of the most sensible issues in a participatory process. If you have detected conflicts, you might want to apply 1) social learning methods such as role playing games, scenario building exercise, citizen juries, nominal group technique, group model building or similar methods (IR, p40-45), and 2) response methods: test the views and perspectives of particular stakeholders with models and simulations as to display the consequences of individual management options on the project (IR, p 45 -49);
- Has the meeting revealed (planning) **design errors** such as forgotten criteria, side effects, hidden costs and other? If so, the original plan or draft should be modified, and in a new meeting or information campaign introduced to the public and stakeholders respectively.
- Do stakeholders have a significant knowledge deficit, it is recommendable to plan educational activities (IR, p24)

At this point a definit participatory plan including a planning sheet are to be determined.

5 Second interactive phase

The design of this phase within the participatory process depends on the analysis of the first meeting and related activities. The following methods can be applied:

- educational activities, if there are still knowledge gaps among stakeholders, but also professionals;
- events can help to increase the publicity and popularity of the project;
- popular involvement campaigns can recruit volunteers, and take advantage of the labour and creativity of lay people. Besides idealistic, artistic and monetary benefit, these activities may increase their sense of ownership remarkably;
- for a follow-up meeting, collected, analysed and processed must be available, so that this activity does not

repeat the effort of a previous meeting. The stakeholder analysis and categorisation including the various views of the stakeholders should be completed. In this meeting stakeholders may be already confronted with scenarios or planning options that include various perspectives, and indicate the consequences of particular options on the individual stakeholder or groups as well as the variety of possible consequences on the affected community. Appropriate methods are (environmental or economic) models, maps with planning alternatives, 3D models, story lines and other. Make sure the stakeholders are able to comprehend the methods, and are able to draw conclusions.

5.1 Working with models and scenarios

These methods can be part of a follow-up meeting. Whereas stakeholders and lay people were asked to provide their domain knowledge to planners, engineers and managers, the professionals themselves have to prove their own plans and models. In a way this step within both the planning process as well as the participatory process can be seen as a validation and verification of the plans and the available models respectively. If stakeholder perspectives proofed that the plans are not viable, modify them, and enter a new round of validation with stakeholders. All perspectives of stakeholders, however, should be processed with the available methods such as models, simulations, thought experiments or scenarios, and displayed as well as discussed with the stakeholders. Participants must be chosen in a way that those individuals are able to comprehend the methods and all groups are sufficiently represented.

Especially, interactive model approaches require a great deal of expertise and moderation skills. In many cases it is advisable to employ an external expert.

6 Final event

At the very end of the implementation phase of a project it is advisable to have an event that brings together all stakeholders and managers. This may be a final conference, a street party, field trip, etc. The purpose is to create a sense of ownership and community. The latter is important for acceptance, maintenance and sustainability of the overall project.

Related documents:

(IR) M. P. Hare and J. Krywkow. Participatory processes for the design of water storage areas. Technical report, Seecon Deutschland GmbH, Osnabrück, 2005. Seecon TR no. 01/2005 for the TRUST project.

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