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# Mitigating Global Climate Change: A Reappraisal on Networking Governance

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## ABSTRACT

Climate change is a pressing global challenge that transcends national boundaries, necessitating innovative governance mechanisms beyond traditional state-centric approaches. This paper examines networking governance as a viable framework for addressing climate change, emphasizing the growing influence of non-state actors, including international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), and transnational environmental groups. These stakeholders play a crucial role in shaping environmental policies, mobilizing resources, raising public awareness, and advocating for sustainable practices. The study explores networking governance fosters transparency, facilitates multi-stakeholder engagement, and strengthens climate diplomacy through collective action. While this model presents significant opportunities, it also encounters challenges such as the disproportionate influence of powerful entities, resource dependency, and accountability concerns. To enhance its effectiveness, improved coordination, information sharing, and regulatory mechanisms are essential. Finally, the paper argues that when properly structured and regulated, networking governance can complement traditional governance models, offering a more inclusive and adaptive approach to climate change mitigation. By fostering collaboration between governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, this governance framework has the potential to drive meaningful environmental action on a global scale.

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### INTRODUCTION

Climate change is now widely recognized (Helm & Hepburn, 2009). According to Helm (Helm & Hepburn, 2009), carbon dioxide levels are expected to reach 400 parts per million (ppm) in the near future. Scientists predict that this surge in carbon dioxide could lead to a 2-degree Celsius rise in surface temperature-an increase 10% higher than that of the 20th century. Additional consequences of climate change include shifts in precipitation and snowfall patterns, increased evaporation, and more frequent and severe droughts, floods, sea level rise, altered ocean currents, and iceberg melting (Pittock, 2013). To mitigate these impacts, a rapid reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is imperative, necessitating significant transformations in mindset, culture, behavior, and regulatory frameworks(Leading Change toward Sustainability, n.d.) (Doppelt and McDonough 2010, 12). The international community has made numerous attempts to reach a consensus on addressing climate threats. One of the key signs was the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which established measurable targets for reducing carbon emissions. However, as Harrison and Sundstrom (Dimitrov, 2011) note, "nations and individuals typically are unwilling to reduce greenhouse gas emissions unilaterally," presenting a major challenge to global cooperation.

The problem of climate change is a 'wicked problem' and defying solution is its nature(Crowley, 2010). It is neither easy to define a 'wicked problem' nor simple to solve (Althaus et al., 2007). These problems require public engagement for structural consultation and organized debate (Hoppe, 2010). The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC - cited in Ison 2010) identifies climate change as a "wicked problem" due to its complexity as a policy issue, involving multiple levels of government and non-governmental organizations. The APSC highlights ongoing disputes over both the nature of the issue and the methods for addressing it. Environmental problems transcend national boundaries, affecting individuals on a global scale and transforming local concerns into international challenges (O'Neill, 2017).

Mentioning to environmental policy researchers, Chhotray & Stoker (2009) observe that an 'international regime' is the basis of environmental governance. To demonstrate that a strong international regime cannot be established without a dominant leader or state, scholars have adopted the hegemonic power approach. This paper will assess the effectiveness of network governance in addressing climate change in the absence of strong global environmental leadership. It will first explore the theoretical dimensions of network governance, followed by an examination of the role of non-state actors in climate change governance. Their contributions will then be critically assessed, leading to concluding remarks. This discussion will focus exclusively on network governance within a global framework.

### **GOVERNANCE**

People do not have any voice in the hegemonic structures of international organizations (Kumar & Messner, 2010). Similarly, the slow pace and obstacles faced in traditional and intergovernmental decision-making processes dissatisfy multinational corporations (MNCs), non government organizations (NGOs) and other activist groups (O'Neill, 2017). Streck (2002) adds that traditional patterns of international treaties and organizations are insufficient to face the challenges caused by globalization. Streck (2002) also argues that the inclusive and transparent process of service delivery is urgently needed to address the problems related to climatic issues. This inclusiveness is reflected in Young's (Delmas and Young 2009) definition of governance where he says, 'governance is a social function centered on efforts to steer societies or human groups from collectively undesirable outcomes (e.g., the tragedy of the commons) and towards socially desirable outcomes (e.g., the maintenance for a benign climate system)'.

The subsystems of Jenkins and Sabatier (1994) include actors from different public and private organizations who are concerned with public issues and interested in influencing public policy regarding those problems. Rhodes (1997) refers to governance as a process where self-organising networks are involved in service delivery. He defines 'network' as interconnections and interdependency among different actors coming together from government and non-government sectors. Althaus, Bridgman, and Davis (2007) argue that non-government decentralized associations of interconnected actors negotiate and bargain on the basis of their values and ideas. Direct involvement of citizens and groups in the environmental policy-making process gives them a common value; it becomes easier to reach a common agreement among all the parties; and above all, peoples' engagement smoothes the implementation process (Baker 2008). Consultation also gives a chance for inclusion of the interests of all the sections of the society in the policy-making process (Dryzek, 1992).

### **GLOBAL GOVERNANCE**

The commission on Global Governance defines governance as 'the sum of the many individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs' (Makinda, 2007). Willetts (2011) defines global governance as,

Systematic processes of interactions between governments and global civil society, primarily focused on the policy outcomes of international organisations, each operating within their own distinct set of structured political relationships, to establish norms, formulate rules, promote the implementation of rules, allocate resources, or endorse the status of political actors, through the mobilization of support for political values.

Global governance is based on a 'power politics' dimension where the interests and choices of the monolithic powers are reflected. NGOs and multinational

corporations also have influence on global governance consistent with hegemonic interests (Makinda, 2007). UN conventions, supranational institutions like the European Union (EU), non-government organizations (NGOs), and social movements at the grassroots level – with these interdependent and cooperative actors, the new world is now more pluralistic, dispersed and anarchic with influential voice (Kumar and Messner, 2011). Kumar and Messner also maintain that the newly-developed multinational democratic theory addresses the questions of sovereignty and democratic legitimacy beyond the nation states in the new world order.

Rhetoric on decentralisation, community participation, self-help and the growing number of NGOs and partnerships open the door for non-state actors to play a vital role in governance (Kennet, 2008). Willetts (2011) argues that after the end of the cold war, there were worldwide discussions about how to strengthen international cooperation and organizations like the United Nations. Willetts maintains that representatives of various eminent global Commissions founded a Commission on Global Governance in September 1992.

### GLOBAL NETWORKING

Networking governance plays a crucial role in addressing climate change by bringing together various actors from government, non-government organizations (NGOs), multinational corporations (MNCs), and grassroots (Salazar, 2023). This interconnected system encourages movements collaboration, information sharing, and joint decision-making, enhancing the implementation of climate policies. Through networks, non-state actors can influence negotiations, advocate for climate-friendly initiatives, and promote sustainable practices. NGOs, for example, often act as intermediaries between governments and the public, raising awareness and pressuring policymakers to adopt environmentally responsible strategies (Azis, 2022). Additionally, businesses engage in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to demonstrate environmental commitment (Hwang, 2024). Despite its strengths, networking governance faces challenges such as dominance by powerful actors, resource dependence, and limited influence in regions with weak civil society structures. Nonetheless, effective networking governance has proven essential in mobilizing global efforts to combat climate change.

# INTERNATIONAL REGIMES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The concept of 'international regimes' includes international treaties and agreements, intergovernmental organizations, binding and non-binding norms and principles, relevant national and local government institutions, and associated NGOs and private institutions (Vig - cited in Chhotray and Stocker 2009). Participating states and other international government organizations (IGOs) and international non-government organizations (INGOs) comply with these regimes because they accept the legitimacy of the rules and underlying norms, as well as the validity of the decision-making procedures (Karns and Mingst, 2004).

# ABSENCE OF GLOBAL CLIMATE LEADERSHIP AND GLOBAL CLIMATE NETWORKS

The 'Realists' in international theory believe that anarchy arises when there is no strong state to control all the sovereign countries in the international system. However, this anarchy leads to the formation of international alliances and the ideology of 'self-help' is the basis of this alliance (Griffiths and O'Callaghan, 2007). In the twenty first century it has become a multi-centric world, in which a significant number of international non-state actors from different international networks interact over different global issues, and as an alternative to the global anarchy, a supranational authority empowered by the international legal system and backed by centralized use of force has emerged (Willetts, 2011). This supranational authority mobilizes, organises, and guides groups and individuals for specific and justified causes like economic exploitation and global environmental problems (Kumar, 2011). Willetts (2011) maintains that the interconnected global system was termed 'interdependence' in the 1970s, 'international regime' in the 1980s and 'globalisation' from the 1990s onwards. 'Interdependence' focuses on transnational relations, 'regimes' give emphasis on epistemic communities, NGOs and MNCs. MNCs have great influence on globalisation.

Eckersly (2007) argues that 'states have no incentive to take multilateral or unilateral action to protect the environment whenever this might create costs or disadvantages relative to other states'. Additionally, states may not prefer the issue of environment over fundamental security or economic interests. This analysis of state behaviour explains the positions of the US and Australia (initially) in relation to the Kyoto Protocol (Eckersly, 2007). Regarding climate change leadership, the EU is considered the international climate change leader. However, most members of the EU require the assistance of 'Emissions Trading System' and 'Clean Development Mechanism' credits to meet their targets. The number of member states has risen to 27, so it is difficult to manage the enormous size of this international body with such diversified functions. The inclusion of countries like Poland, which are heavily dependent on coal for energy generation, is a barrier for achieving the emission reduction targets (Carter, 2010). In 1996, the USA withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol. Though some of the states of this country have initiated several mitigation programs, these were at the domestic level, not at the global level (Hodas, 2007). At the same time, the implementation failure of Canada, Australia's reluctance to act, the lack of target for developing countries like China and India create a vacuum of leadership in the area of global climate change (Harrison 2010; Crowley 2010; Harrison and Sundstrom 2010; Heggelund, Anderson and Baun (2010). Nevertheless, multilateral diplomacy allows leadership from various sources such as strong and weak countries, an alliance of states, an NGO or a coalition of NGOs or an able diplomat (Karns and Mingst, 2004).

# **EMERGENCE OF NON-STATE ACTORS**

The global public policy network brings together institutions and individuals (Wolfgang et. Al, 2000). INGOs represent different sections of society

independently and are not established by interstate treaties (Goodman, 2007). Organized NGO initiatives established the International Union for Conservation of Nature in 1956. This movement received public response to a larger extent during the 1960s. In the history of global environmental governance, the role of the United Nations (UN) and transnational communities is very significant (Karn and Mingst, 2010). Non-state actors have been demanding opportunities for active involvement in the international agenda-setting and negotiations process since the 1970s. They organized a voluntary parallel forum with 250 NGOs at the Stockholm conference on Human Environment in 1972. Then in 1992 at the UN conference on environment and development in Rio de Janerio 1400 NGOs attended. This conference accepted NGO activities positively because it needed NGO assistance for a global campaign aimed at creating awareness of climate change and subsequent follow-up initiatives. The final document of the Rio conference called for 'utilizing expert views of NGOs in all phases of policy processes' (Karn and Mingst, 2010). These gatherings strengthened the networking among NGOs across the globe.

Both NGOs and MNCs get support from governments and intergovernmental organizations (O'Neill, 2009). Government and private organizations engage community in the policy-making process through publicity, education, projects and social movements (Bulkeley and Newell, 2010). UN Resolution 1296 grants NGOs accreditation for consultation. With the invitation of the Secretary General, international NGOs can attend meetings within their field of expertise and submit statements. Some IGOs have provisions in their charters for the participation of non-state actors, whereas others have established procedures for gradual inclusion. To have UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) consultative status, INGOs must be recognized, representative, accountable, transparent, and democratic and be funded by voluntary non-government sources (Goodman, 2007). Non-state actors are increasingly treated as partners in multi-stakeholder coalitions. The EU identifies them as 'civil society organizations'. Millions of small NGOs work at the grassroots level in 192 countries. These NGOs are not recognized as independent international legal entities, but now they are allowed to enforce a few international rules and enjoy the right to raise cases in selected adjudicatory settings (Karn and Mingst, 2010).

# CONTRIBUTIONS OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN CLIMATE CHANGE GOVERNANCE

Islam (2009) observes that NGOs perform four types of activities. These are: research, creating awareness about environmental issues, organizing movement and development activities. As representatives of the stakeholders, international response from the INGOs to a particular environmental danger can enhance transparency (Lisowki, 2010). With the advent of communication technology, INGOs can communicate among themselves, easily respond to negotiating proposals and outcomes and also respond to the public at large. For instance, Greenpeace, one of the biggest INGOs in the world has its own media facilities through which it can circulate photographs and scripted video spots to television channels in eighty-eight countries within hours (Wapner, 2005). Communication

creates ecological sensibility and changes the behaviour of people and states. For instance, in the 1960s, whales were used as targets by the US Navy and Air force, while after 25 years; the world community funded \$5 million to save three whales trapped in Alaska (Wapner, 2005).

Corporations hold the major responsibility for climate change (Haufler, 2009). However, now corporate social responsibility (CRS) involves voluntary actions by firms. Sometimes to uphold the company's reputation or because of a threat from government regulations, they behave in an environmentally friendly way. CRSs are sometimes performed in collaboration with NGOs, governments and IGOs (Delmas, 2009). NGOs encourage MNCs to improve their environmental performance by using the threat of sanctions or consumer boycotts, or sometimes by direct cooperation with them (O'Neill, 2009). Wal-Mart, Tesco, Nike, Coca-Cola and other such large companies have undertaken initiatives or made commitments for climate-friendly projects (Giddens, 2009). McDonald's decided to abandon its foam and plastic containers in response to pressure from environmental groups. Activists in the USA pressured supermarkets to stop selling and pressured schools to stop serving Alar-sprayed apples because the chemical was found to cause cancer. Demand for apples fell significantly in the US and apple farms faced massive profit loss. Finally, these groups were able to convince the producers of Alar to stop its production (Wapner 2005). Therefore, when people are convinced to change their behaviour and producers respond to environmentalists' pressure, activist groups do not need to convince the governments.

ENGOs are also active in developing countries as Markandya et al. (2002) observe that in Asia, Latin America and North America in the absence or inefficiency of government authority, neighboring communities can enforce informal regulations on manufacturing units' environmental performance. From different countries and regions, 365 NGOs have formed 'The Climate Change Network', which has 20 million members worldwide. This network puts pressure on countries to fix carbon emission targets, helps developing countries to use renewable technology and assists environmentally vulnerable countries to adapt to a changing climate (Giddens, 2009). Transnational Environmental Groups provides the poor people in the developing countries with alternative energy sources, improved marketing of fish to reduce overfishing, and protected mangroves from being used for fuel by planting fast-growing fuel-wood trees (Wapner, 2005).

Regarding NGOs' intervention in international conferences, NGOs organize themselves as supported by Karn and Mingst (2010), who state that before most UN-sponsored conferences, NGOs run campaign and agenda-setting activities. During the state-level negotiations, NGOs, business owners and other organizations arrange a parallel meeting among themselves. They cannot vote but are allowed to make interventions. Sometimes they are included in government delegations and enjoy access to all meeting places. These non-state

'diplomats' represent the interests of their constituencies, participate in negotiation, exchange information and give policy advice (Bulkeley and Newell, 2010). Canada, Denmark, Portugal, India, Indonesia and the Philippines invite NGO representatives to participate in the climate change negotiations as members of their official delegation (Lisowski 2010). Expert NGOs provide scientific information on climate change, which has a great influence on policy outcomes. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is an output of such contributions (Karn and Mingst, 2010).

Environmental NGOs generated ideas and proposals that strengthened the bargaining hands of negotiators prior to the Hague Climate Conference (COP 6). INGOs have access to a wide range of participants at the international and national levels. To run their activities, they pool the resources of their members, aggregate the position of these members and protect government-funded NGOs from budgetary cuts when they criticise their respective governments' actions. INGOs ensure transparency in two ways: increasing public awareness leads to public scrutiny of the negotiators, and rectifying informational asymmetries between negotiations empowers negotiators. Business and industrial NGOs have also created umbrella groups, among which the International Chamber of Commerce and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development work in favour of actions that reduce carbon emissions (Lisowski, 2010).

INGOs are in a better position in terms of physical and financial resources than IGOs. For instance, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), responsible for the environment on a global level, has to run its program with an annual budget of only \$20 million US. With this insufficient resource base and lack of reputation within the international community, UNEP has become more bureaucratic than a scientific agency. The effectiveness of the UNEP has been limited by poor leadership and distant location (Nairobi) from the centre points of all other international organizations (New York, Geneva, Paris or Rome). It cannot lobby without violating Article 2 (7) of the UN charter. This article forbids UNEP from intervention in the domestic jurisdictions of the states. On the other hand, the headquarters of most of the ENGOs are situated in developed countries. Most of them can lobby at both the national and international levels. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Greenpeace spend millions of dollars on projects in developing countries (Kellow, 2000). The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) spends \$70 million US on biodiversity alone, while Greenpeace's annual budget is \$270 million US budget (Shaidle 2010).

### ROLE OF NETWORKS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

Climate change is an international issue. However, policies taken at the international level must be ratified and implemented at the domestic level. In this case, local non-state actors play a significant role at both the regional and national levels. NGOs in the EU support climate action fervently, and they campaign for individual as well as corporate behaviour in order to bring positive change to the world's climate. At the EU level, the Green 9 Group of environmental NGOs have achieved advisory status in EU decision-making (Schreurs and Tiberghien, 2010).

NGOs in Russia sponsored independent research, established a joint webpage named 'Kyoto ves', and economists conducted research on the impact of ratification on the Russian economy. An alliance between domestic and international NGOs collected ten thousand signatures from around the world to endorse a letter asking President Putin to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Business bodies that wanted to take advantage of the Kyoto Protocol's flexibility mechanisms advocated for ratification (Henry and Sundstrom, 2010). In Japan, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have accepted NGOs as credible partners, information providers and a means of connecting to the public over climatic issues. Similarly, NGOs have also developed immense expertise and capacity to contribute to policy formulation through participation in summits, ministerial councils and the Diet. One former NGO representative has become a member of the House of Councillors. He maintains a strong connection to environmental NGOs. In 2001, 13 NGOs in Japan organised a parade to stop global warming; they released statements demanding that the government stand firm and push ahead with the Kyoto Protocol. The Japanese press has also been supportive of NGOs' activities and the Kyoto Protocol (Tiberghien and Schreurs 2010). Chinese scientists alerted the public and the government about the consequences of climate change. Media campaigns have also been run on scientific information, reduction of energy consumption and increased energy efficiency. Associations of journalists who usually focus on energy have begun working on climate change. However, economists in China place emphasis on economic development first, then, according to them, the government can start to reduce carbon emissions (Heggelund, Anderson and Baun, 2010). American scientists played an important role in preparing the IPCC. They have made a great contribution to the dissemination of information proving that climate change is genuine and it is caused by human activities (Harrison, 2010).

Therefore, INGOs and NGOs are involved in the governance for climate change by creating mass awareness, providing information, putting pressure on governments and MNCs for reducing carbon emissions and by strengthening the bargaining power of the states. MNCs play a role by changing behaviours and through CRS. However, in spite of these contributions, networking governance has some limitations, which are discussed below.

### LIMITATIONS OF GLOBAL NETWORKING GOVERNANCE

A few powerful actors tend to dominate global civil society. Often, urban, industrialised and technologically superior players from Western societies dictate over poor and marginalised people of the developing world within a disguise of global civil society (Kumar, 2011). In developing countries where civil society is underdeveloped, there is a lower chance of community participation in the environmental policy-making process (Baker 2008). Therefore, engagement of pressure groups in these countries still remains at the consultation stage rather than negotiation (Kennet, 2008).

INGOs' resource dependence on governmental bodies is increasing. This creates a qualitative transformation of INGOs from socially-responsive to resource-led organisations (OECD, 2000). From 1995-97, Greenpeace International and its national branches received more than two-thirds of their funding from Germany, the USA, the UK and the Netherlands. The rest of the funds were provided by Switzerland, Austria and Sweden. In 1995 and 1997, Germany alone funded 45-46 per cent, which became 53 per cent in 1996 for the international operations headquartered in Amsterdam. These extra budgetary funds help donation-receiving organizations advance while at the same time protecting the interests of the finance-providing countries (Kellow, 2000). For instance, the German company Henkel developed an alternative detergent free of phosphates. In order to promote this new product, Greenpeace campaigned against phosphate. However, now, it is found that the alternative detergent kills organisms and creates foaming in the rivers (Kellow, 2000).

Although NGOs create mass awareness, sometimes they manipulate public expectations regarding negotiations and potential outcomes and help set the negotiating agenda. For instance, business and industry NGOs in Canada effectively manipulated public expectations about the costs of emission reduction in the country (Lisowski, 2010). However, the environmental community being weaker than the business community in Canada, it could not influence the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol (Harrison, 2010). Similarly, in Australia, networks which were supporting the ratification and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, promoting alternative energy and sustainable business, were also kept out of the policy-making process (Crowley, 2010). MNCs are an integral part of network governance. However, among the business umbrella group, the Global Climate Coalition and the Climate Council work against the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol (Lisowski, 2010).

When environmental issues are linked to economic concerns, then the NGOs have less influence on decision-making because the policy-makers give more emphasis on short-term measures for economic development rather than long-term impacts on the environment. Again, in case of limited access of NGOs to international environmental negotiations, they cannot exert influence (Corell and Betsill 2001 - Corell and Betsill 2008).

The basis of networking is coordination, which stands on four pillars – consistency, coherence, efficiency and consultation. Extensive communication for harmonious performance is essential for networks. The success of networking depends on shared information and trust, and raises issues of privacy, accountability and collaborations (Althaus, Bridgman and Davis, 2007). Neoliberal institutionalists argue that cooperation is possible under a well-designed environmental treaty or regime because complex interdependencies among multilevel actors may cause 'suboptimal' consequences (Eckersly, 2007). However, Held (cited in Kumar and Messner, 2011) argues that now, international actors and forces easily cross national borders in different ways,

and powerful countries make decisions for people across the globe. In this situation, it is not easy to ensure the accountability of the actors.

Traditionally, non-state actors have been regarded as separate from global governance. Integrating these actors into the model of global environmental governance creates difficulties at various levels. Along with this, widespread adaptation of joint ventures, extensive transnational supply chains, complex relations of company ownership, alliance and competition, and outsourcing of government services make the definitions of firms complicated. International regulations on domestic companies may be treated as a threat to countries' sovereignty (Haufler, 2009).

Windeler (Weinges, 2009) observes that there is a lack of evidence to show that networks are more efficient than the formal international regime, and whether they are more effective in reality and what the reason is behind this, is not properly explained in the literature.

### CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the global climate is changing, and this trend of climate change is posing a great threat to human civilization. The traditional structure of governments and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) has limitations. The impact of climate change is happening everywhere in the world. Its effects are so vast that it is not possible for governments alone to deal with this issue. It needs everyone's efforts everywhere in the world. Climate change, being a complex issue, requires actors from both the government and non-government sectors. Nowadays, ENGOs are so advanced in terms of resources, scientific knowledge and bargaining power that they are capable of working side by side with the governments and IGOs.

In the past, non-state actors wanted to actively participate in global environmental governance. They have been contributing to climate change governance in 'self organised' way in spite of having some drawbacks. Now, after realizing the potential of networking governance, international organizations and states are inclined to open the door. The UNO and IGOs allow NGOs and business representatives to participate in decision-making processes. NGOs are valued for expert views and worldwide connections, and businesses get recognition for their changed attitude towards climate change issues and for CRS. Therefore, it is now well established that networking governance, comprised of both public and private actors, can contribute positively to the problem of climate change. However, the success of this process depends on better coordination and communication. Above all, accountability and transparency of these organizations must be ensured for the sake of good governance.

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