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TEMPORARY USE · DYNAMICS FOR LIFE

DEEP DIVE STUDY VISIT NANTES

TEMPORARY USE AS SLOW URBAN PLANNING

The Deep Dive Study Visit in Nantes intended to explore the question of temporary use as a tool for a full-scale city laboratory. It took a specific and unique point of view of the city: specific forms of what could be called a "slow" urban planning that is, a spirit of positive hacking of standard construction processes and rules to enable a transformative use and a willingness to pass from a distributive negotiation to an integrative co-creation of public space.

But before deep diving in these emerging concepts, let's introduce the island on the Loire River right in the middle of the city agglomeration where those 3 days took place. The disappearance of the shipyard activities in the late 90s left a traumatic economic and social situation in the city of Nantes and a huge brownfield in the West of the former industrial island to leverage on to redynamise the whole territory around.

A CITY LAB ISLAND

Models and maps exhibited at Hangar 32 to present the on-going development process of the island of Nantes
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios

"The SAMOA is opening new pathways: we benefit from a strong and determined political support. We experiment. We can make failures. We transfer all our successes and methods for the benefit of the entire Nantes Metropolis"

says Jean-Luc Charles, Director of the SAMOA the developer of the island of Nantes.

Dan Clinci, leading the Urbannect Association from Cluj, Romania translates enthusiastically:

"The island of Nantes is a city laboratory that will benefit to the rest of the city that is making more classical urban planning"

Meeting room of Le Karting, an incubator of IT start-ups installed temporary in a former depot on the South of the island.
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.

How does this transfer take place? This question is particularly relevant for the REFILL network that is supposed to transfer promising practices between city partners and for the entire URBACT community launching Transfer Networks. Jean-Luc Charles proposes a slightly enigmatic answer:

"The transfer is made in an intuitive way…"

Virginie Barré, Project manager at the SAMOA, translates it into more concrete terms:

"Then this means that the guys from the Nantes Métropole Aménagement, the sister structure of the SAMOA which is responsible for the development of the whole metropolis, call me asking "how did you manage to do that?" and I try to show them the pathway we followed"

Beyond asking the way the transfer is made, it means evidence of good practices is recognized because they reach their goals. Iván Tosics, URBACT Thematic Pole Manager in charge of the RE-FILL Network questions the lack of objectivity

"Before making a transfer you always need a kind of assessment. The corruption is everywhere"

The discussion develops on equity in temporary use. For Virginie Barré it's a matter of win-win operations:

"La Centrale, a temporary hosting of 40 IT start-ups doesn't cost public money"

"The preferential rents paid by the start-ups during the 10 years of the temporary use period will cover completely the investments to install the temporary offices. The SAMOA is just acting as a form of bank adding its experience to build these kinds of solution"

Open space

La Centrale is a former industrial buiding refurbished by the SAMOA and that is rented as small offices for start-up from IT and cross-media for a period of 12 years
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.

Iván Tosics points problem of transparency of temporary use:

"Because you cannot find office space at such a low price on the market then it's a form of subsidy attribution"

Dan Clinci acknowledges but underlines a multiplier effect:

"Incubators such as the Karting or La Centrale is also about other benefits for the city than financial profit for the temporary users"

The indirect benefits such as synergy within the pool of companies hosted, the increase of activity in the neighbourhood, the attractiveness for youth in the city, the economic activity on the territory are difficult to measure but seem to be worth it. And Virginie Barré to conclude:

"For a developer, rather than doing nothing, let's try to do something that doesn't cost anything!"

Le Karting incubator was created to host the creative industries that gathered in the Halles Alstom during the first 10 years of redevelopment of Nantes Island. The solution imagined by SAMOA to convert a huge industrial depot into an hotelling for stat-ups is based on original wood boxes forming a village of office spaces from 10 to 100 sqm and nice inside-out spaces around for the gathering of the creative communities.
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios

SLOW URBAN PLANNING

Progressive redevelopment of the island of Nantes see from derelict spaces in the South-West of the island
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.

In the late '90s, the challenge of putting back the island on the map of the city of Nantes was not a quick win. Three decades after, the situation of the island of Nantes seems to have made a great move towards the future. As Marieke Zeegers, Project manager at SAMOA, explains:

"we are going to concentrate all the creative industries here on the island"

Another creative district in good progress! How was that possible? For Jean-Luc Charles:

"The worst enemy of the city is speed. We are developing here a tempered urban planning that leave time to the time"

West part of the Island of Nantes showing the brownfields left by the former shipyeard industries and the related railway yeard.
Photo SAMOA

Natalia Madajczyk Coordinator of international projects for the City of Poznan compares:

"In Poznan, we are willing to do redevelopment too fast: here in Nantes it seems to be more Slow Food like, a "slow urban planning" in a way"

Miruna Draghia, Urban Planner at Urbasofia, Bucharest in Rumania adds:

"you give the city the time to breathe"

Open air collective barbecues among the many temporary street art installations, gathering places, bars and cafés along the Loire attracting inhabitants and tourists on the island.
Photo Martin Argyroglo / LVAN

Jean-Luc Charles goes on:

"In order to manage such a large and long project as the redevelopment of the island of Nantes, you need a fiction, a story to maintain the dialogue between the desirable city and the possible city"

Les Nefs, the former shipyeard construction places hosting now the famous street art company Royal Deluxe and Les Machines that became the emblem of Nantes.
Photo Franck Tomps

This dialogue taps right into temporary use as one of the ways to try the desirable fiction without compromising the capacities to implement parts of this fiction when it reveals to be successful. We are right in the core focus of the Deep Dive Study Visit of Nantes exploring how temporary use may be a way to experiment with urban planning. For Dan Clinci:

"Temporary use gives the opportunity for cities to experiment and it's a chance for urban planners to identify innovative and unconventional types of usage in the city"

But where in most of the REFILL cities and beyond temporary use emerges first as a way to tackle vacant spaces and host socio-cultural initiatives, temporary use - or better transformative use - in Nantes seems from the beginning to develop as a clear tool for urban renewal. As Emilie Jeanni-ot, former Project manager at the SAMOA explains, it leads to turn sometimes the concept a bit upside-down towards a revocable permanent:

"Because we don't want to give an image of degraded public space built in a temporary

style, we support citizens and artistic projects to be built in a permanent way. But we may also disassemble them if the realisation doesn't reveal satisfactory"

Calls for projects *Green Island 1 & 2* involved citizens in imagining and selecting experimentation projects along the Loire in order to invent and test new usages of public spaces.
Photo Strategic Design Scearios.

Temporary use is clearly a mean and not an end for the SAMOA. For Virginie Barré:

"Le Karting or La Centrale are not just temporary building office spaces but a test to check if the setting of the place works as an incubator"

Image Cinéma Transmédia

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La Centrale is a 1000 sqm building partially renovated as a business incubator. From the graphic identity an original design for a set of furniture were developed.
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.

Marieke Zeegers adds on explaining the design-to-cost competition launched for the installation of La Centrale temporary offices:

"Every project is an opportunity to activate the creative district"

And also for Stéphane Juguet an anthropologist and urban activist in charge of *Ilotopia*, a 3 years experimentation launched by SAMOA and focused on the coproduction of the public space with inhabitants of the island:

"The public space becomes a platform to build public interest"

ILOTOPIA.fr
RENCONTRE CITOYENNE DU 3ᵉᵐᵉ TYPE

MISSION

Rencontrer les habitants
pour recueillir les imaginaires

DESTINATION

Explorer " République - Les Ponts ",
le Faubourg de l'Île

OBJECTIF

Aménager les espaces publics
pour vitaliser le quartier

DES IDÉES ?

REJOIGNEZ-NOUS SUR PLACE POUR
EMBARQUER DANS L'AVENTURE

TRAM L2 / L3 | ARRET WATTIGNIES

DES OUTILS
ALLER À LA RENCONTRE

EMBARQUER   DÉDRAMATISER

Stephane Juguet and his team are based in a temporary use former *Euromaster Garage*. From there they build intreaging machines, transform old busses to be used as mobile workshop rooms and use these tools to engage conversation with citizens in the city and co-produce urban transformation.
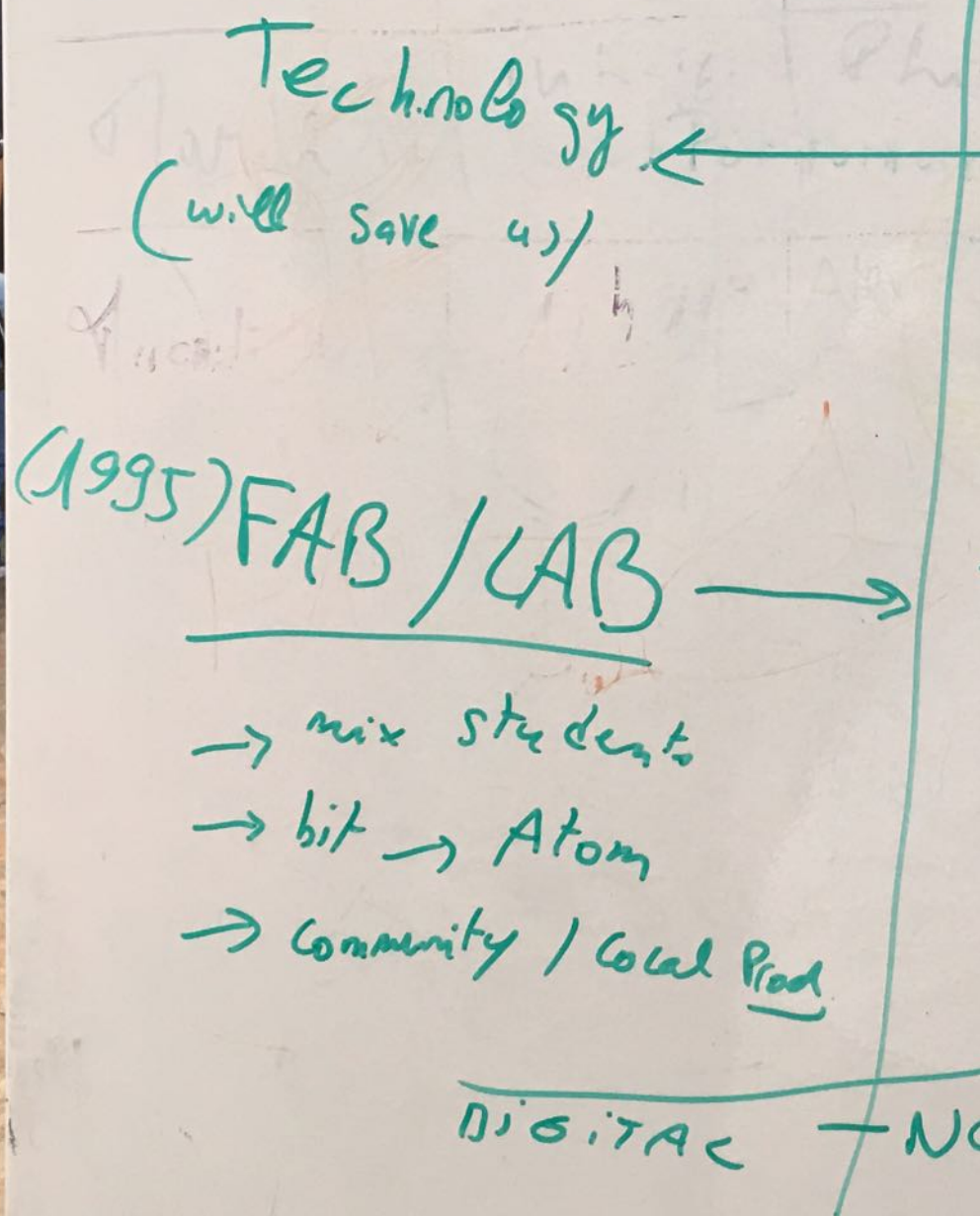Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.
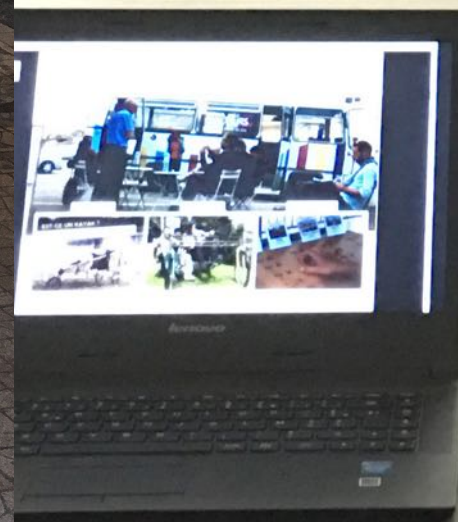
POSITIVE HACKING

REFILL Deep Dive Study Visit on the roof of the recently built school of architecture commenting the progressive redevelopment around.
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.

Ping is hosted at Plateforme C on the Island. One of the founder of the association Julien Bellanger filled-up a complete whiteboard to explain what Ping is: a makerspace, a fablab, a third-place, a brico-lab, a hacker place, etc.
All these new buzz words fit also very well to outline how the SAMOA and the island of Nantes is working. Jean-Luc Charles explains:

"SAMOA is one structure with both a long term urban planning team and a short term economic development team"

Ping is a non for profit installed in the Platform C temporary use on the island of Nantes and working as a makers space exploring digital worlds and their impact on society.
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.

This setting naturally bridges city development and economy. Which is to say that despite unavoidable difficulties to find synergies between urban developers for whom the time unit tends to be the decade and economic support services for which a one-month delay means sometimes missing an opportunity, the SAMOA is structurally able to build synergies between its 2 streams of activity as Marieke Zeegers explains:

"As a developer, SAMOA is able to invest 600 thousand euros to transform le Karting from an old industrial shade into a start-up village. The SAMOA as an economic development agency has been benefitting from a great incubator for at least 10 years for free. At the end, the low rent paid by the start-ups during 10 years will balance the investment made by SAMOA as developer"

Positive hacking is also about finding creative and responsible ways to develop temporary use between the strict construction laws and security standards…
Mélanie Boghos from Ecoimmo the operator managing the renting of the spaces of the Solilab explains:

"The space is designed so that all the functions of the building are available to disable people without the necessity to build expansive elevators. This is the trade-of to make it possible within a temporary use framework"

SOLILAB is the second incubator organized by the SAMOA focused on start-ups from the social and solidary economy.
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.

"We don't even try to bend the rules, we just use our knowledge to make construction controllers and security officials realize that they have flexibility"

explains Virginie Barré giving many examples all along the Deep Dive Study Visit.

"These wood benches and gardening boxes would nether be accepted on the public space. They are installed on private land and we are not too much looking at where is the limit between them"

Open air gathering area built by inhabitants with recuperated materials to increase the participation in urban redevelopment.
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.

"There is nobody around the Gipsy camp so there is less risk that someone complains about the experimental house we built for them with no clear construction permit"

Gipsy camp on the South of the island engaged in a national experimental program called *MiniMaous* includes the co-conception and experimentation of a permanent construction matching the cultural patterns of Gipsy life.
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.

Esperance Café, a roaster shop and bar in the North part of the island.
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.
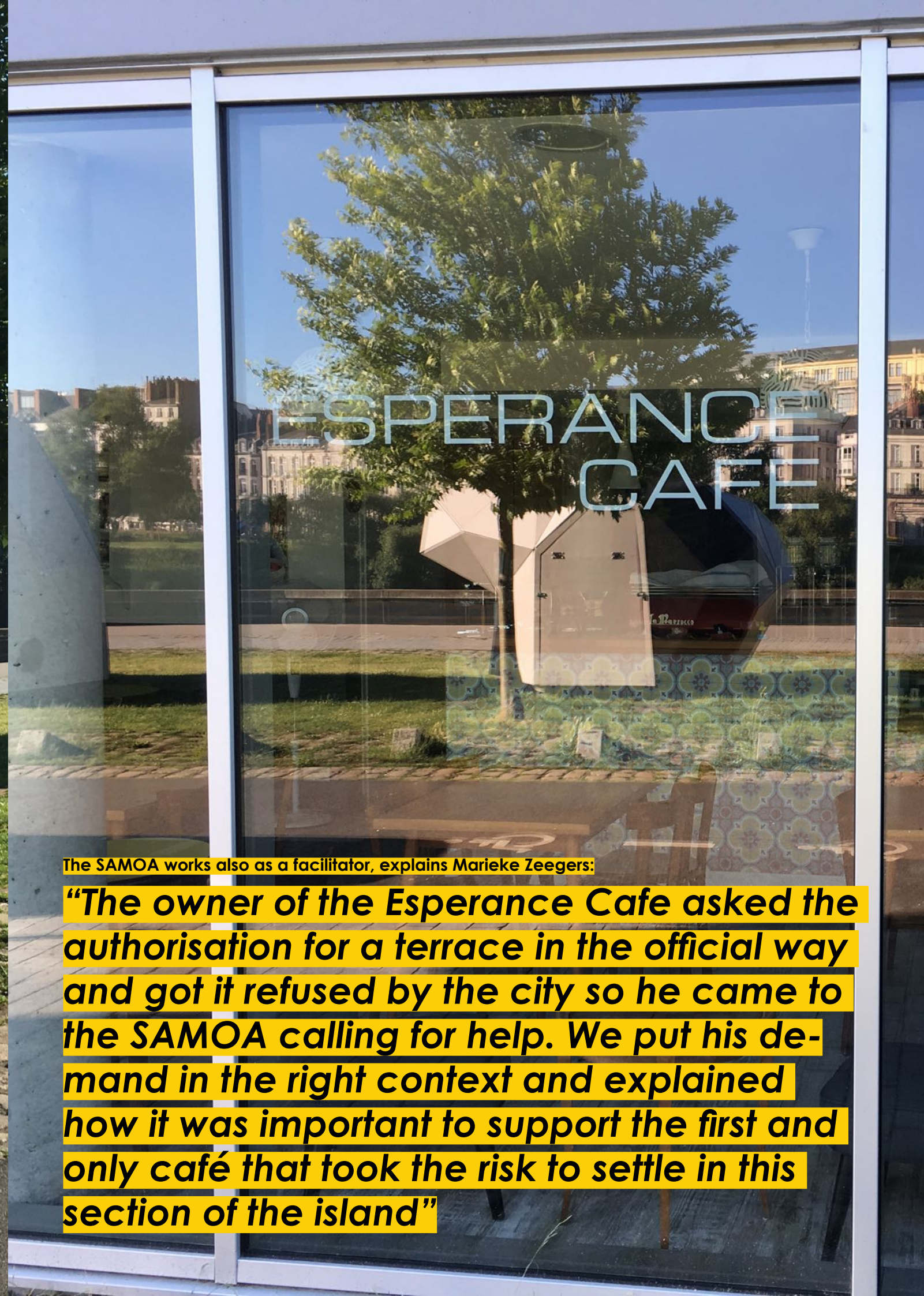
ESPERANCE CAFE

The SAMOA works also as a facilitator, explains Marieke Zeegers:

"The owner of the Esperance Cafe asked the authorisation for a terrace in the official way and got it refused by the city so he came to the SAMOA calling for help. We put his demand in the right context and explained how it was important to support the first and only café that took the risk to settle in this section of the island"

Hearing the success stories of the SAMOA one may have the impression of a kind of magic. At least the participating city partners have a feeling of alignment: political stability and constructiveness; personal engagement and enthusiasm of staff; form of kindness between the various actors; etc.
But this collective goodwill is still very fragile reminds Viginie Barré:

"There has been a fire in the building of La Cantine a couple of months ago. Investigations concludes it was an accident but since then there has been much less courage to take risks among all stakeholders"

La Cantine Numérique, a third space hosting a co-working space oriented to digital industries.
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.

Such risk-taking attitude leads several times the conversation between participating cities on the right to experiment and what it really means the right to fail.
Virginie Barré makes it short:

"If you fail you'd better quickly reshuffle your storytelling and find a new way to explain that it was not such a failure"

Communication to better hide a mistake? This is maybe too much of a caricature and city partners discussed in-depth this crucial question for them: a failure is the only possibility to touch the reality. As Paul Watzlawick made it clear with his famous metaphor of a ship passing a strait in the fog: if it passes without damage, the captain only know that it's a possible route but he cannot say anything from the shape of the coast. On the contrary if the ship touches a rock, the captain can start to outline the shape of the strait. And it is the same for failures in urban development as anywhere: the new storytelling that Virginie Barré calls is not a lie but the right way to turn the lessons learned into a new actionable roadmap!

Participants to the Deep Dive Study Visit in Nantes discussing around the example of the SOLIBAB social and solidary economy incubator.
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.

INTEGRATIVE PARODICIPATION

INTEGRATIVE PARTICIPATION

"Empty space needs creativity"

Says Andzelika Jablonska Macowicz, Director at Poznan Design Festival, capturing the way temporary use is approached on the island of Nantes.

As Stéphane Juguet puts it showing around his temporary use basecamp settled in a the former Euromaster Garage, it's an asset for an imaginative posture:

"Temporary use is a restriction but also an opportunity because it forces us to keep on moving"

Backside of the *Garage Euromaster temporary use* is the atelier of Stephane Juguet and his team shared with a local thearter set building company.
Photo Strategic Design Scenarios.

The debate developed on stakeholders' engagement and their relationship with the transformational use on the island. Lise Marie Marchand, leading La Conciergerie a citizen hub to voice inhabitant within the redevelopment process explains this temporary structure:

"We are close both to the citizens and to the real estate developers. We are there to set the frame at the beginning and then to let citizens develop their action autonomously"

La Conciergerie is the citizens engagement space of the *îlînk* association to imagine, prepare and activate the neighbourhood life within the *îlînk* real estate program.
Photos Strategic Design Scenarios.

Stéphane Juguet among the magic set of artefacts to free the conversation he and his team created for the Ilotopia initiative, describes the Heterotopia Capsule:

"It represents the combination of the vision of the architect from above and if you look through the lenses you also see the people and how they use the city"

Hétérotopia, a metaphoric object imagined by Stéphane Juguet and his team to stimulate the social conversation on urban planning approaches: the space capsule represents the vision from above of architects and of urban planners. Inside the capsule, a model of a landscape with people suggests that users should inspire urban planning form the inside.
Photos Strategic Design Scenarios.

For Emilie Jeanniot the key questions are:

"How do we work with citizens before there is any project and how do we make sure that the project effectively uses what has been elaborated by the citizens?"
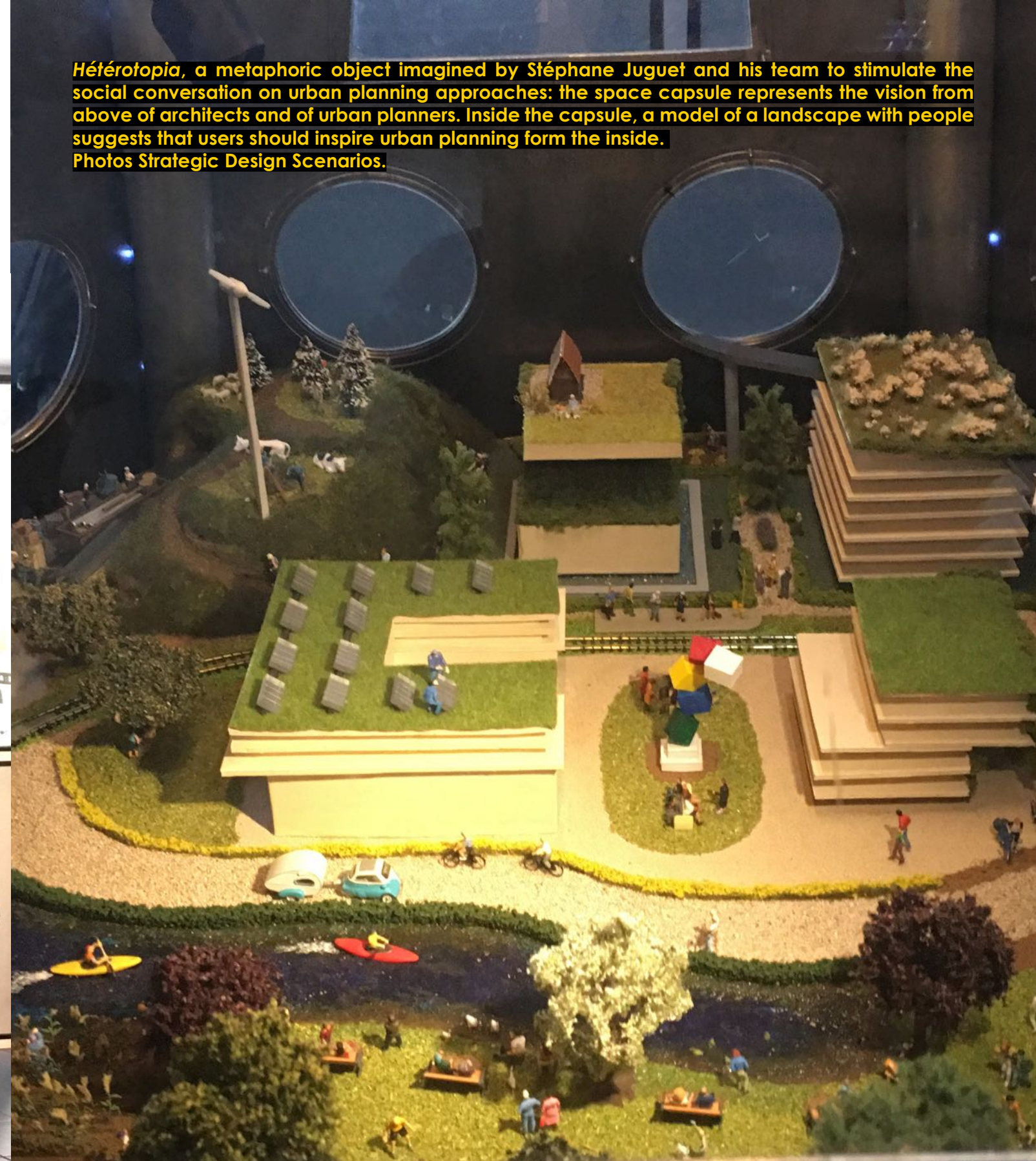
A negotiation between stakeholders can be either distributive – when for what one wins is exactly what the other looses – or integrative – when a bit of creativity points to another solution where both parts are winning something. Thanks to a constant input of creativity, stakeholder processes on the island of Nantes seem to be rather integrative than distributive or as Stéphane Juguet puts it:

"Working with people we don't get their opinion but their imagination"

REFILL partner countries:
Ghent (Belgium - Lead partner) - Amersfoort (Netherlands) - Athens (Greece) - Bremen (Germany) - Cluj-Napoca (Romania) Helsinki (Finland) - Nantes (France) - Ostrava (Czech Republic) - Poznań (Poland) - Riga (Latvia)
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