

University of Tartu
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of Education
Curriculum of MA Educational Technologies

Anna Jacobs

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A SUCCESSFUL YOUTH OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM IN
CITY PLANNING PROJECTS.

MA thesis

Supervisor: Associate Professor of Educational Technology, PhD, Emanuele Bardone

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Abstract

Article 12 from the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children hold the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them: the place/community they belong to is a matter of such importance. Since the 1970s there has been a growing number of programs in cities around the world that engage children in city planning projects. In Boston, there is currently no regular directed youth engagement and outreach program that is used by city planners. The objectives of “Guiding Principles For A Successful Youth Outreach and Engagement Program in City Planning Projects” are (1) to analyze three active programs that focus on city planning, urban design, or street safety education, and (2) outline components that are paramount when setting up a youth outreach and engagement program in city planning projects.

Keywords: Youth Outreach, Youth Engagement, City Planning, Intergenerational Learning, Civic Engagement, Place-based Learning, Participatory Design

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Introduction

A city is its' societies' cultural and political center, therefore, how the children and other vulnerable groups are treated in the city can give an insight into whether a city and its officials are thoughtful of their residents (Chawla & Malone, 2002).

On September 6, 2022, Michelle Wu, the Mayor of City of Boston, announced a 3-year plan “for transforming Boston's streets to better serve people walking, rolling, and riding bikes.” Among the ways to reach the 3-year goals, Mayor Wu informed residents about “launching a citywide design process to bring safer streets to every neighborhood” (City of Boston, 2022, Our Plan section, para. 1). This intentional citywide design process, led by several City of Boston agencies, invites residents to be part of the working group that helps design the bike network (City of Boston, 2022). However—as informed by an anonymous survey about outreach strategies with the City of Boston officials, specifically with city planners—often those who can and would join community events, such as open-houses, town hall style meetings, etc, may be unrepresentative of the whole community. According to city planners' experiences with their community outreach events in the City of Boston, there may be a participation bias influenced by individuals that are affluent, older, white, have attained a certain level of education, possess civic literacy, and have flexibility/time in their schedule (A. Jacobs, personal communication, April 1 - May 22, 2023). This indicates that the citywide design process, in which Mayor Wu invites constituents/community to participate in, too can be impacted by lacking the voices of those, who do not have flexibility or time in their schedule; those who have not attained a certain financial status nor a certain level of education and/or may not possess civic literacy, and, finally, those, who do not have political power, such as children. From an equity standpoint this means that these groups of people must be approached more intentionally. The focus of this research is on youth and how to set up a youth engagement and outreach program that would allow for a regular inclusion of youth voices in the city's functions,

such as in city planning. Urban function, according to Živković (2019), or a *function of city*, applies to a society and their activities in cities, as they relate to urban social needs and urban spatial forms.

This paper comprises of the following parts: In *Theoretical Framework* I assess why it is important to involve children in city functions that concern spatial awareness and connection to a place / community, such as city planning projects; and what is already done worldwide & what—locally; In *Methods* section I describe summative content analysis and qualitative data collection, i.e., the methods I use to analyze three active youth programs that focus on city planning, urban design, and /or street safety education; in *Results* parts I share the outcomes of my research, and in *Discussion* part I set forth the guiding principles and outline components that are paramount for a successful youth engagement and outreach program in city planning projects.

Theoretical Framework

On March 10, 2023, Mayor's Wu Office released a press release titled “Connect, Learn, Explore: Boston's Commitment to Youth” in which Wu states, “We are building a city with access to quality education, safe housing, robust health care, and healthy and affordable food for all our kids. In partnership with our families, we are working across City departments *to deliver for* our littlest learners.” In the press release, Mayor Wu urges the necessity to go beyond meeting basic needs, and empower children by providing access to five key competencies: arts, swimming, bicycling, playing sports, and growing food. Mayor Wu states that these commitments “will help our kids learn about themselves & connect with their community by age 8” (Mayor's Office, 2023).

Firstly, my postulation is that not only through providing access to services for children, but also making them active agents in city functions, such as involvement in the projects related to city planning, would enhance the mayor's stated objective of “helping children connect with their communities.” In other words, the city officials should not only do things *for* children, but also do things *with, involving* children as stakeholders. Secondly, involving youth regularly would also

enhance *who* participates in the city-wide design processes, making it a more equitable process. Across the many delegated functions and services that the city provides for its residents, my project focuses on study of selected youth programs / curriculums that have city planning, urban design, and/or street safety functions at their core, because these areas of focus all relate to city planning. Thirdly, the experiences collected via an anonymous survey with the city planners also inform that the level of engagement with youth is inconsistent and varies based on the types of projects that the planners are working on. If the process of youth engagement could be streamlined in the City of Boston in the city planning realm , it could have a positive impact on all parties involved: a potential to enrich planner's outreach strategy toolkit and a potential to empower youth. Finally, through a regular youth engagement, families and communities, that may be not represented otherwise, can be reached better as well.

Children Have Different Perspectives From Adults

There are several reasons why it is important to involve children in city functions, such as city planning, first being that children have different perspectives from adults. Christensen and O'Brien (2002) remind us that the physical size of children—them being smaller than adults—makes the encounter with the physical environment and the neighborhoods a very different experience, distinct from that of an adult. Children are shorter, thus more proximate to the ground: there they more rapidly see changes in pavement textures, spot potholes, and notice varying heights of the curbs and steps. Furthermore, the size of street furniture, such as lampposts, benches, signs, appear to be more substantial to children than to adults. Curious by nature and generally not bothered by the risk of getting their hands dirty, children are more tactile and bodily with their surroundings, streets, and spaces (Christensen & O'Brien, 2002). Through the bodily and sensory experiences, movements, and embodied social interactions Christensen & O'Brien (2002) claim that children embody their neighborhood therefore acquiring an “emplaced” knowledge of

their neighborhood as simultaneously social and physical location. When surveying children and adults inquiring both groups about desired urban improvements: children's responses included not per se child-like ideas, such as more repairs needed to fix streets and street furniture, suggestions regarding adding more street lights, as well as, naturally, more spaces needed for playing, whereas adults' ideas addressed fears, such as traffic safety, and security Christensen & O'Brien (2002). Ergo, children's perspectives are different, yet they are as valid as those of adults.

Place/Community Has An Impact On Children's Development And Vice Versa

Nevertheless, to a certain degree, children do acquire their caretaker's views on different topics, including attitudes towards outdoors. In some cultures, such as North America, young children are socialized to be more indoors or in more controlled spaces, and outdoors may be portrayed as a place of danger, whereas in other cultures, e.g. West Indian tribes, the home *is* the outdoors (Christensen, P. & O'Brien, 2002). Despite these differences in cultural approaches, the outdoors or *the street* is an "important passageway to neighborhood and adulthood" (Christensen, P. & O'Brien, 2002, p.5). *The street*, to a lesser or larger proportion, enables children to spend time with their peers; to interact with representatives from other generations; to mature; to develop social competencies; to aid the constructions of social and cultural identities; and to expand their geospatial understanding of places (Christensen, P. & O'Brien, 2002).

As Matthews (2002) notes in regards to the street as a site of identity, "the ways in which young people use the street vary by age." Children at age 11-12 and under use the street for play, games, and explorations, whereas children starting approximately age 13 and up find the street as "a social haven" or a place for meeting with friends, hanging out with where things happen. As Matthews (2002) points out that for teenagers, who usually have little money to spend, the street provides spaces to get away, and the street also teaches territorial awarnesses.

However, in many cities, including Boston, spaces are more segregated: children have their places and adults—theirs; and in many cities the youth rarely is entrusted to problem-solve and make decisions in their communities. These two factors combined may contribute to a sense of a disconnect for children from their communities later in life (Guajardo & Rauhaus, 2021).

Churchman (2010) further adds that many cities are not designed for use, particularly independent use, by children. In a discussion with children in Springtown, a town 48 km (30 miles) away from London, UK, Morrow (2002) observed that children may experience a sense of exclusion because of lack of appropriate facilities for children and of *places to go* that are not cost-prohibitive. One young participant in Morrow's study expressed that, “she felt that they should have a say in the community, because what happens does affect us as well as the adults, but they don't seem to think that when they make decisions” (Morrow, 2002, p. 175).

Nevertheless, worldwide we are finding examples of the effective projects and programs that enable inner-city children to share their ideas and envision changes in their cities as a method informing future planning processes and enhancing the connection to a place/ community. Youth engagement in participatory planning was first highlighted in the 1970s with urban designer Kevin Lynch's (1918-1984) “Growing Up in Cities” project, and by 1990s had been extended in to different countries. Children who participated in the “Growing Up in Cities” programme consistently sought opportunities to participate in community life and decision-making (Chawla & Malone, 2002; Derr, 2015). Youth engagement in planning is becoming more common in many cities around the world: one such project is a project in Italy, titled “The Town of Children” that started in the town of Fano in 1991 and since has grown to be a project consisting of three programs, namely, “Children's Council,” “Participated Planning,” and “We go to School Ourselves.” “The Town of Children” has inspired 60 towns to use this approach and some 150+ towns have implemented at least one of the three

programs; it has become an important Italian project supporting children's citizenship rights and promoting children's social participation throughout the country (Baraldi, 2002).

Another successful example comes from Gothenburg, Sweden, where in 2018-2019 the municipality facilitated a series of intergenerational workshops that included sixty four children, seventeen elders, and twelve adults (including activity leaders and school staff), all having dialogues related to the process of planning a new cultural center in one of the suburbs of Gothenburg. Being part of a major urban development programme, the City of Gothenburg used this project to increase citizen impact in urban planning. The study included intergenerational dialogues and illustrated how civic engagement can bond people together, including socially disadvantaged people and people representing different generations, as they partake in city decision-making (Davet, 2022).

Further, the right to the city—a term introduced by social theorist Henri Lefebvre and popularized by geographer David Harvey—implies the liberty to make and remake it. In light of that, Harvey's work includes a project that was striving to achieve spatial appropriation by the design and construction of a temporary structure through a participatory process also known as Participatory design (Leddy-Owen et al., 2018). Participatory design refers to a collaborative process between professionals and non-professionals, where non-professionals' can participate equally in a design process (Leddy-Owen, 2018, p4). Collaborative projects as such with youth have shown that when children are invited to discuss ways that their neighborhoods could be improved, children are capable of providing practical suggestions, including increasing activities for specific age groups, improving traffic, making safer and cleaner paths and shortcuts (that often are used by children).

Ergo, because of the successful and empowering examples worldwide, and because of children's different, yet valid, perspectives, the City of Boston should consider how to consistently include children's voices in the adult-dominated planning process. To understand how children

experience and construct a sense of place and how they connect with their community, engaging *with* them on a regular basis is valuable in the process of improving their physical environment; that, in turn, can also empower them to be active members of society, which is a mutual long-term benefit (Christensen & O'Brien, 2002).

Like Adults, Children Too Are Active Social Agents And Cultural Producers

Today's land use and consumption patterns, busy roads, and car traffic are caused by adults: how adults choose to operate within the city impacts the movements of children. Adults are active social agents and cultural producers, and adults do have political power (Matthews, 2002; Morrow, 2002). Children, on the other hand, do not have political power, yet they learn to operate *within* the framework of adult's, often carving their own spaces and attaining an emplaced knowledge of the place (Matthews, 2002). Furthermore, the objective of the adults, who are caretakers, is to equip children with a formal understanding of the outdoor space as a geographic and social environment and educate children on the rules that associate with it. This requires children to engage in a dual-task and integrate spatial knowledge with their emplaced knowledge (Christensen, 2002). Interestingly, as author Pia Christensen explains, "Spatial knowledge vs emplaced knowledge is not necessarily only a child-adult phenomena: lack of consensus at first frequently occur between city planners and residents, who live locally in the areas of projects, because planners' logic of spatial knowledge transgresses the emplaced meaning that local residents have acquired for the particular area" (Christensen, 2002, p.26). Nevertheless, the ability to engage in dual-task and integrate within the existing framework is evidence, as Matthews (2002) states, that children too are active cultural producers. In terms of possibilities to improve the neighborhood, children can put forward and discuss many reasonable and practical improvements and suggestions. Yet also, children often have limited self-efficacy, as they are aware that their ability to participate in decision-making for their neighborhoods and communities is limited. That lack of opportunities to

be actively involved during their formative years, in turn, may also cause implications in that disbelief that they can, despite living in the democratic structure, have influence later in life, and this attitude, belief may be passed on to their own children later, when they become adults.

Wherefore, youth is often not regarded as stakeholders, their perspectives and views more often are perceived as less important. However the benefits to engage children are multitudinous. The civic engagement of youth can benefit the children themselves by strengthening their sense of being active social agents and cultural producers; that, in turn, can have a long-term benefit to the city and its society because the city is then inherited by youth with stronger civic engagement ability and desire. Moreover, empowered and engaged youth can also have positive short-term and long-term effects on other stakeholders in their respective communities, including within their families via the Intergenerational learning process. All in all, according to Article 12 from the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, children hold the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, and the place/community they belong to is certainly a matter of such importance (UNICEF, 1989). Setting up a youth engagement and outreach program in city planning projects in Boston would be an exemplary way to uphold their rights.

Youth Engagement In The City Of Boston

The diversity of Boston is evident in the wide representation of different cultures co-living in the city, however there is also a different kind of diversity—a significant disparity between the very rich, the middle class, and those, who may be struggling financially and require assistance from the state. Despite its aspiring efforts to be as progressive as possible, to bridge the gaps, and to address inequalities and inequities, Boston still is a city in a country that is operating under a capitalistic structure. The priority of increasing public and recreational spaces, and affordable housing often competes with construction of private and commercial-use spaces and luxury condos; the former does not generate material profit, the latter does. Hence, when it comes to the debate of

public vs. private, those with louder voices, deeper pockets, and/or most influential political say, often will influence the decision, as opposed to the groups that are considered minority, i.e. those with quieter or no legal voice and no political (voting) power. This, by design, places children outside the democratic system, because until the age of 18 they have no political power (Morrow, 2002). An anonymous survey, see Appendix A, about outreach strategies with the city planners in Boston confirms that often those who join and speak up during community events regarding city infrastructure changes are individuals that are affluent, older, white, have attained a certain level of education, possess civic literacy, and have flexibility/time in their schedule (A. Jacobs, personal communication, April 1 - May 22, 2023). The anonymous survey also shows that (1) youth outreach strategies by city planners vary depending on the project, but generally are more one-of events, and not a consistent regularly practiced strategy /program, and (2) constraints working with youth for planners include limited capacity, such as “having the time, space, and connections to engage with organizations and work with youth in meaningful ways” (A. Jacobs, personal communication, April 1, 2023). Furthermore, Lily Xie, current artist in Boston Artist-in-Residency, who is experimenting with what community engagement could look like if the city would be putting more of the power of envisioning in the hands of those, whose voices are usually not present, states, “Oftentimes with planning or development processes, the power is in the hands of the developer, the planner, or the government official” (Department of Arts & Culture, 2023, para. 4). Nevertheless, like in any other place of the world, in Boston too the young members of the society are the ones who are inheriting the city of tomorrow, which is built by adults of today. Therefore I argue that creating a meaningful, streamlined, regular program to involve youth voices in city planning projects should be considered by the city officials. Consequently, the research problem for this study presents itself as: there is currently no existing program to involve youth regularly in the city planning projects as part of the community outreach process in the city of Boston. The objectives of this research include: (1)

analyze existing youth programs in the region that focus on city planning, urban design, and/or street safety education; (2) outline components that would constitute a successful youth outreach and engagement program that could be implemented for city planning projects in Boston.

Research question: What components are paramount when setting up a program for collaborating with and engaging youth in city planning projects in Boston?

Methods

The primary data collection in this research design included a summative content analysis of the open-source materials of three programs, each described in more detail in the Sample section. Summative content analysis involves identifying essential concepts, finding them, and counting the occurrences in the textual sources (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The secondary data collection included a qualitative data collection method, specifically surveys of the representatives of the three programs. The goal of the study was to analyze three programs and outline components needed for a successful youth outreach and engagement program. The two methods—a quantitative and a qualitative—described above were selected to corroborate the results.

Sample

The sample of the research included three programs: Safe Routes to School Massachusetts (SRTS MA), New York City's Department of Transportation (NYC DOT) Student Workshop Sessions, and Y-PLAN program. The three were selected due to several shared characteristics. First, all three programs are built around city planning, urban design, and/or street safety education; all these themes, in turn, relate to spatial awareness and connection to a place/community. Second and third, all three programs are geared towards school age audiences and all have originated in the United States. Fourth, all three programs are generally known as open-source programs, meaning, the lesson plans are available online and can be used and replicated by any educator, instructor, or a workshop facilitator. Final reason for selecting these particular programs is the factor of

continuation: by design these programs are multi-session programs and not a one-of events. In the next section each of the programs in the sample is described in more detail.

Safe Routes to School MA

Safe Routes to School MA (SRTS MA) is a free program that is funded by the federal government and administered by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). Safe Routes to School MA works to “increase safe walking, biking, and rolling among public elementary and middle school students”(Massachusetts Department of Transportation, 2022, March). This program uses a collaborative and community-focused approach with the objective to bridge health and transportation. To achieve their objectives, this multifaceted program uses six E’s approach, namely, Education, Encouragement, Engagement, Evaluation, Engineering, and Equity—which combine infrastructure related and non-infrastructure related tasks and activities. For this project I will be focusing on one out of the six “E’s” namely, Education. As part of Education, SRTS MA outreach coordinators work with students, their families, and other stakeholders. For students this includes training sessions, school assemblies, workshops, videos, and printed materials. For caretakers, educators, and community stakeholders the tools include webinars, lesson plans, videos, and other materials available for download. Specifically, the program / curriculum of Safe Routes to School MA titled Bike & Pedestrian Safety Education, is included in the sample (Massachusetts Department of Transportation, n.d.-a). The overview and resources of the lesson plans for both Bike Safety Education and Pedestrian Safety Education are extensive and can be accessed at Safe Routes to School website, section Education (Massachusetts Department of Transportation - Education, n.d.-b).

NYC DOT Student Workshop Series

A more grassroots level program in comparison to SRTS MA is run by city planners from New York City's Department of Transportation. The Student Workshop Series usually take place in the neighborhood where NYC DOT has an active city planning project. The group that this program engages with consists of students attending a school's Afterschool program (Haiman, 2022). The Workshop series according to N.Haiman (personal communication, October 5, 2022) includes the following sessions:

- (1) What does DOT do?—is a review session of the DOT toolbox (signals, markings, concrete and treatments: protected bike lanes, intersection normalizations etc). The crash data for the corridor/intersection in question is also reviewed together by planners and students.
- (2) Field visit (measure street, gather speeds, etc)—is a session that includes a local field work in which students and planners inspect one or two blocks, and students fill in a field sheet where they record vehicle speeds, measure how wide the street is, record the parking regulations and whether the street is fully parked up.
- (3) Design charette—is a session, where the planners bring a plotter-printed plan of the street and encourage students to mark it up. Facilitators also use a magnetic version of StreetMix (a collaborative civic engagement platform and tool for urban design) which the children can tinker around with to identify different cross sections.
- (4) DOT returns with proposed design— is a session, where planners give a presentation to the students showing the proposal and explaining how and where they did/didn't use their ideas.
- (5) Students review the proposal, practice presenting—in this session/s, the afterschool program selects 2 or 3 students to present the beginning portion of the presentation in

which students discuss existing conditions and the partnership. Then the DOT project manager continues the presentation by sharing the actual proposal.

(6) Final-session—Students help present a project to the local community board at a public meeting.

Y-PLAN

Y-PLAN is an award-winning, civic learning strategy developed by University of California Berkeley's Center for Cities + Schools (CC+S) (Center for Cities + Schools, University of California, Berkeley. (n.d.). This program has been around for 20+ years, successfully involving youth in the city planning. The program provides the tools and platform to address infrastructure and safety challenges in selected areas, and any teacher can undertake a role of a facilitator. This open-source program is set as an adaptable "6-step Roadmap approach" and consists of the following lesson plans:

"Project Planning" is an introductory module in which students and school community learn about Y-Plan, establish partnership with planners, and identify project topics to create a work plan.

"Start Up" module (can be a series of lessons), starts with SWOT analysis, continues with meeting with a client (another stakeholder in the community), and together creating a plan.

"Making Sense of the City" module is where participants map the site to understand the project site, as well as engage in interview and surveying of the community to then do a storytelling of the place.

"Into Action" module is a brainstorm session/s, where participants find inspiration and create a vision for change.

"Going Public" module focuses on refining the proposal, preparing the presentation, and presenting to the public.

“Looking Forward and Back” as a final module involves a reflection component, reflecting on successes, debriefing with clients, for older students making connections with colleges and other useful resources, and planning on future actions.

Finally, the length of Y-PLAN based projects can range from just one week to several months, on average being 4-8 week long projects, and the program can be tailored to any grade level (Center for Cities + Schools, University of California, Berkeley, n.d.).

Data Collection

For data collection my primary method was content analysis method, specifically, summative content analysis technique. The textual sources used for this analysis included open-source materials, such as lesson plans, teacher guides, curricula descriptions, etc. For Safe Routes to School MA and Y-PLAN, these were obtained via a search on the internet; whereas the NYC DOT program's curriculum was shared at NACTO conference, and explained in more detail via personal communication via email by Nina Heiman (October 5, 2022). Through a synthesis of a theoretical framework for summative content analysis, I identified four main concepts: (1) Intergenerational learning; (2) Place-based learning component; (3) Civic engagement component, and (4) Participatory design component; these concepts are explained more in depth in the next section. My secondary method included an online questionnaire shared with each of the program's representatives via personal email communication. The survey consisted of five questions—all displayed in Appendix B—and of supporting informative visuals explaining each concept in the survey, see Appendix C.

Concept 1: Intergenerational learning

According to Tsiloni et al. (2023), Intergenerational learning means “people of different ages engage in meaningful and mutually beneficial activities, aimed at developing knowledge, skills, and values.”

To facilitate Intergenerational learning, two factors need to be in place: structural barriers need to be removed and people of different ages must be brought together (Davet, 2022).

Findings by McClain et al. (2022) indicate that the importance of family discussion in non-academic programs can bridge more abstract topics and connect them to local experiences.

Bang et al. (2016) further strengthens the case for Intergenerational learning by explaining that learning across generations juxtaposes the more conventional forms of learning of today that include age-segregation. In fact, Bang et al. (2016) structured their design teams in their research to also be Intergenerational, because the objective of their researches required multi-generational perspectives for equity reasons (Bang et al., 2016). Because Intergenerational learning is a tool to combat inequity, I included this concept for the summative content analysis.

Concept 2: Civic engagement

As defined by Pearlman-Avnion & Grayevsky (2019), Civic engagement implies an individual's concern for society, and a positive and active involvement in the local community and beyond. Components of Civic engagement can include some or all of the following: a knowledge about functions of the government; participation in the politics (voting, obeying laws); possession of values such as a sense of commitment to society; and recognition of social injustice and a wish to change it (Pearlman-Avnion & Grayevsky, 2019). For youth, important predecessors for increased sense of responsibility and future involvement in Civic engagement are social relationships with others, opportunities for involvement, and opportunities to observe the values and behaviors modeled by adults (Pearlman-Avnion & Grayevsky, 2019). Family and parents have a strong influence on a child, because they serve as role models for their children, thus, parents can also influence their children's Civic engagement both intentionally and naturally, leading by example (Pearlman-Avnion & Grayevsky, 2019). In other words, if caretakers do something, children are more likely to do that something too.

Nevertheless, according to Cohen & Korintus (2016), cultural learning is a two-way process in which children themselves play central roles. Therefore, I argue that the Civic engagement process has a potential to have a bi-lateral as well as a radial impact: children's Civic engagement too can influence caretakers and other people in their social circles. If even just the presence of children can have a shift in an adult's perception—for example, an environment that may have a normal function for a childless adult can begin to feel unsafe when an adult becomes a parent—then what may be an effect on caretakers if their youth begins to be actively engaged in local civic affairs? (Christensen & O'Brien, 2002).

Research in natural-disaster struck areas by Guajardo & Rauhus (2021) shows that those young citizens, who are prepared to engage in local civic affairs, contribute greatly to a healthier and sustainable community; have valuable and unique perceptions of their community; and care for social equity and justice in community development and resilience.

In the summative content analysis, I include whether programs/curriculums have Civic engagement, because not only this aspect aids in empowering youth, but also Local government officials can benefit from different perspective and thus the unique solutions that youth may bring to the planning process and in such way local government officials can be including underrepresented perspectives in the planning process, which in turn promotes social equity in practice (Guajardo & Rauhaus, 2021).

Concept 3: Place-based Learning.

According to Cohen and Korintus (2016) the idea of “the community” is not necessarily always connected to a physical “place”—examples of such include virtual communities, or global-communities that form based on shared values or interests. However, based on the place we live, for each one of us, whether it be an adult or an under-age individual, *the place* still is a component that forms the base of our understanding of a community—physically, socially,

historically, aesthetically and emotionally. Place-based learning, also known as place-based education in pedagogy, is linked to active and collaborative learning and a site-specific learning resource (Cohen & Korintus, 2016). Traditionally, this approach taps into local history, culture, and local economic activities, and the context of individuals living locally. The American educator John Dewey (1916-1997), as well as Soviet Psychologist and the originator of Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development Lev Vygotsky (1896-1938), were the first thinkers of contextualizing Place-based learning (Cohen & Korintus, 2016).

Next, Gruenewald and Smith (2008) highlight place-based education as the educational rival of a broader movement towards recognition and appreciation of the local in the age of globalization. They refer to this broader social movement as the 'new localism,' which intertwines well-being of community life with education, enculturation, and human development (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008). Moreover, Smith and Sobel (2010) point out that although Place-based learning may be perceived as a pedagogical approach for rural schools, in the United States "some of the most exciting examples of place- and community-based education are flourishing in inner-city schools" (Smith & Sobel, 2010, p. x).

Thereupon, I am incorporated Place-based learning concept in summative content analysis, because the benefit is two-way/ bi-lateral: It enables youth to contribute politically to their communities, whereas for educators, stakeholders, and other partners who are utilizing the place-based approach it increases chances to receive public attention and public interest, and even unsolicited coverage in the local newspapers and local groups (Cohen & Korintus, 2016).

Concept 4: Participatory Design

According to Belgrave et al. (2022), the power of Participatory design is to create culturally situated, inclusive, and effective interventions. Furthermore, according to authors DiSalvo, Clemente and Pipek, Participatory design, as a human-centered approach, enables multiple stakeholders to gather

together and work as a community on co-creating designs for a variety of things, thus giving all participants an agency and ability to design culturally-relevant artifacts “*for, with, and by* those, who will use them” (as cited in Chew et al., 2021, p.1). Notably, the projects, where community is involved, are incrementally more complex as the number of involved constituents and stakeholders increases (Chew et al., 2021). In my evaluation of the programs/curriculums, I selected to add whether the programs have a participatory component, because this tool, despite its added complexity, would benefit both—the participants by being empowered, and the city officials by being able to have more equitable discussions.

Results

The results of the summative content analysis and the qualitative data analysis showed that the four concepts that were identified, namely, Intergenerational learning, Civic engagement, Place-based learning, and Participatory design, were all present to a smaller or lesser degree in each of the evaluated programs. The qualitative data analysis includes direct quotes of the survey respondents—Elena Lunyova, Active Deputy Director, representing New York City's Department of Transportation, and Deborah McKoy, Executive Director of Center for Cities + Schools, at The University of California, Berkeley, representing the Y-PLAN program. The two Safe Routes to School MA representatives that I have been in communication with were not granted permission from MassDOT to partake in the survey. For the overview of the results of the collected data via summative content analysis see Appendix D. For the results of the collected data via qualitative data analysis, see Appendix B.

Intergenerational Learning

Intergenerational learning concept was the most popular concept evident in all three programs based on the summative content analysis. For example, Biking and Pedestrian Safety Curriculum by Safe Routes to School MA program had at least three occurrences that indicate

Intergenerational learning opportunity: “Train the Trainer” workshops, which are geared towards adults, are a tool to demonstrate to faculty members how to lead bike safety education lessons; alike “Adult Mentor Model” component is geared towards adults, particularly parents, guardians, and school staff, to demonstrate how to lead pedestrian safety sessions at their respective schools and communities (Massachusetts Department of Transportation, n.d). The lesson plan, titled “Walking in Your Community,” in Pedestrian Safety Workshops curriculums, invites children to walk around the neighborhood, interacting respectfully with the community members. Assuming adults and elders are encountered on this field trip, this shall facilitate an Intergenerational learning (Massachusetts Department of Transportation, 2017, March 10). Whereas in NYC DOTs Student workshop series the following three lessons: Session 2 - Field visit (measure street, gather speeds, etc); Session 4 - DOT returns with proposed design, is evidence between; and Session 6 - Students help present a project to the local community board at a public meeting were all indicative of Intergenerational learning opportunity. However, Elena Lunyova, a representative of Y-PLAN in her survey response indicated that due to the small size of the workshop does not consider that the program has an Intergenerational learning component. Nevertheless, the interaction between the adult staff and the children by itself marks the presence of an Intergenerational learning opportunity. Furthermore, Y-PLAN’s two modules—Module 1 and Module 4—were examples of Intergenerational learning, and Deborah McKoy, Y-PLAN representative, corroborated this by stating, “Yes, Y-PLAN is centered around youth and civic leaders/city planners working together closely (Center for Cities + Schools, University of California, Berkeley, n.d.).

Civic Engagement

In Safe Routes to School MA Pedestrian Safety Workshop, there were at least two notices of this concept, including in a lesson plan, titled “Walking in Your Community” that invites children to walk around the neighborhood, interacting respectfully with the community members. The

questions in this lesson that students are invited to reflect upon include: “What does being a good neighbor mean?” and teaches that a good neighbor means having a friendly and protective outlook on your community wherever you may live and remembering that we are all connected and what one person does or doesn’t do affects us all (Massachusetts Department of Transportation, 2017, March 10). NYC DOT Student Workshop Series two out of six lessons, namely, Lesson (2) and Lesson (6), illustrate Civic engagement concept (Personal Communication with Nina Heiman, October 5, 2022). Whereas, in the Y-PLAN program Module 1, Module 4, Module 5 had a presence of Civic engagement concept (Center for Cities + Schools, University of California, Berkeley. (n.d.); moreover, Deborah McKoy in her survey response stated that “the entire Y-PLAN curriculum is a civic engagement process.”

Place-based Learning

All three analyzed programs do take place at a specific site— that by design makes the programs Place-based. To exemplify Placed-based learning in practice, I will give overview of Y-PLAN's modules: they require students to map the site to understand it, engage in interviews and surveying of the community, do a storytelling of the place, and create vision for change (Center for Cities + Schools, University of California, Berkeley, n.d.).

Participatory Design

According to summative content analysis I was unable to locate the Participatory design component in SRTS MA Biking and Pedestrian Safety online materials, hence making it the least present concept among the three programs, however, SRTS MA may have this component in other programming beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, NYC DOT Student Workshop series' two sessions include Participatory design, namely, the unit “Field visit (measure street, gather speeds, etc)” that includes a local field work in which students and planners inspect one or two blocks, and students fill in a field sheet where they record vehicle speeds, measure how wide the

street is, record the parking regulations and whether the street is fully parked up, and “Design charette” unit in which the planners bring a plotter-printed plan of the street and encourage students to mark it up. Facilitators also use magnetic versions of StreetMix, which the kids can mess around with to identify different cross sections (Personal Communication with Nina Heiman, 2022). Alike Y-PLAN modules have a strong presence of the Participatory design concept, evident in Module 2 and Module 3 charette (Center for Cities + Schools, University of California, Berkeley. (n.d.).

Discussion

Three components are paramount when setting up a program for collaborating with and engaging youth in city planning projects. These include 1) incorporating intentionally selected guiding principles, 2) facilitating a program that runs regularly, 3) allocating time & resources for coordinating such a program.

Via summative content analysis and qualitative data collection, I vetted four concepts—Intergenerational Learning, Civic Engagement, Place-based learning, and Participatory design—and recommended incorporating all four concepts as guiding principles when setting up an intentional youth engagement program and outreach strategy. Beyond the guiding principles, the sample programs I analyzed in this study also suggest that for an increased impact, it seems important that the youth outreach and engagement programs are intentional, have continuation and are not one off, pop-up events. Next, taking into consideration the inherent quality of the Place-based learning concept, planning out detailed lessons so that they are reflective of a specific place and community would require additional time & resources. Nevertheless, Y-PLAN is a free, open-source, and adaptable roadmap that could be used as a blueprint. That being said, considering the limited availability of city planners, as indicated by the anonymous survey, additional time and input is needed to tailor prospective lesson plans to be site-specific. This suggests that in practice a

designated person would have to be responsible to do this work. Additionally, considering that there are 125 public schools in the City of Boston, it is not feasible to offer such a program at all schools simultaneously: a focus area selection would require additional input regardless whether Y-PLAN, or other open-source program, is used as a blueprint or whether lessons are designed from scratch. This too would require a designated staff member, who selects the neighborhoods and schools, where youth outreach and engagement programs should be a priority. Though a general implementation of such a youth outreach and engagement program can be facilitated by any planner, presuming they are open to work with youth as part of their community outreach toolkit, a designated person on staff should be responsible for coordinating with school sites, and tailoring site-specific lessons (Place-based learning) as these would require additional coordination with other stakeholders in the community.


The limitations of the study include, firstly, a missing qualitative data from SRTS MA. Secondly, the results could be enhanced by the thoughts and experiences of students and families, who have participated in the programs (SRTS MA, NYD DOT Student Workshop Session, or Y-PLAN)—this setting up a ground for further prospective study.

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I have written this thesis independently and that all contributions of other authors and supporters have been referenced. The thesis has been written in accordance with the requirements for graduation theses of the Institute of Education of the University of Tartu and is in compliance with good academic practices.


Anna Jacobs, June 2nd, 2023

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Appendix

Appendix A

An Anonymous Survey Regarding Outreach Strategies With The City Planners in Boston (A. Jacobs, personal communication, April 1 - May 22, 2023)

Timestamp	Describe the community outreach strategies that you have used with a project you worked on?	Based on the strategies you have used, what are the challenges / factors, if any, you have encountered in reaching an audience that is reflective of Boston residents.	Have you used or considered youth engagement strategies, programs for your projects? If yes, what kind of strategies? If not, why not?
4/1/2023 12:22:52	The strategies that I have found most successful includes a combination of holding formal pop-up meetings in outdoor places and walking up to people in their street/neighborhood to share information about projects in their neighborhood. These strategies are most successful in getting the attention of people who otherwise would not show up to a public meeting. I find that people express gratitude that someone who works for the City would approach them to ask for their input or share knowledge about proposed changes in their neighborhood.	The most difficult part of engagement is deepening relationships with people and have engagement extend beyond surface-level interactions (notification) to education and empowerment. It is hard to gain the attention or involvement of people who are willing to follow along with a project through initial engagement, concept design, to implementation. Many people don't have the privilege of time to follow-through with a project, which can sometimes take 2 to 3 years. It's also hard to introduce new concepts, terms, or ideas with people who speak different languages.	I have not used targeted strategies to engage youth, but some youth do show up at our pop-ups and events. Constraints involve having the time, space, and connections to engage with organizations and work with youth in meaningful ways.
4/1/2023 13:44:03	We used several methods for the Ellis SRTS infrastructure project: * We used grant funds to hire a local artist team to lead the creation of a street mural * We hosted some drop-ins in a small park, including on a Saturday before Mother's Day, where we distributed flowers from a local florist * We and the artist team attended neighborhood events (community festival in a park, summer live music in a park) to distribute flyers for the street mural event and to discuss the project. * We attended neighborhood association meetings to provide updates * We did a site walk with a representative of the neighborhood association and plan another one with a larger group and a representative of WalkBoston, to discuss curb extensions * We flyered the neighborhood door-to-door before installation of speed humps	The strategies have been effective at reaching local neighbors who are connected to neighborhood associations and the flyers reached many more. Being present in the community seems to be effective at reaching a broader audience	Youth were recruited to help with the mural, but we could definitely do more youth engagement.
4/2/2023 11:47:08	I have typically used a mix of in-person and virtual engagement strategies in multiple languages. These include: - Targeted stakeholder interviews/discussions - Virtual public meetings - In-person open houses - In-person outdoor pop ups - Tabling at community events	Incorporating youth into the project team: We wanted to have an intentional youth outreach approach with a project that included a street with three schools on it. We hoped to contract a student to help with outreach and to support the project at community events but ran into significant issues with the city's HR process. We then explored using our consultant to subcontract a young person from the community. We ultimately ended up collaborating with the Boston Cyclist Union, which was able to contract a young person from the community who did some significant work early in the project surveying local residents. It would be great to incorporate young people into our projects in a more systematic way to better incorporate their perspectives, and offer compensated work experience in a field that many youths might not realize is a potential career path. Capacity: We have also done some coordination with Safe Routes to School, school administrative staff, and school parents' groups, but due to limited staff capacity, have not targeted specific outreach events at children and youth.	Yes, see above. I would be interested in learning about other strategies to engage children and youth in street safety projects. Aside from the efforts mentioned above, the strategies I have used at public meetings involve keeping young children entertained rather than engaging them directly, which may be a missed opportunity! I do this by bringing transportation-related toys to my outreach events for kids to occupy them while their parents or guardians engage with city staff.
4/3/2023 21:32:29	As an agency we've been moving away from doing traditional town-hall style community meetings. Instead, we aim to engage with people directly and to meet them where they are. That includes doing things like "pop-up" style tables in public locations where the team shows up with a table and materials and talks to passersby. We also do recurring virtual office hours in which constituents can reserve 15 minutes to talk one-on-one with a member of the project team. During the pandemic, we switched to making interactive web pages on an ESRI platform called "Storymaps" that we called virtual open houses. Now that in-person meetings are allowed again, we do open house style public meetings when there is a need for them.	One of the big challenges with community engagement is that it can be hard to reach a representative group of the population. People who engage with city planning efforts, tend to be more affluent, older, white, and educated. They can be averse to any kind of change and have a vested effort in maintaining some kind of status quo. Some of our approaches are meant to provide the opportunity for participation to a wider population. Strategies like pop-up tables and virtual office hours are meant to engage people who would not traditionally engage with planning efforts.	No, I haven't considered it. The types of projects I work on are typically built on a short time frame and the community engagement process is meant more to inform stakeholders rather than do longer term community building. I'm not sure what the benefit of engagement specifically to youth would be, but I am willing to learn more about it.

Appendix A - continued

Timestamp	Describe the community outreach strategies that you have used with a project you worked on?	Based on the strategies you have used, what are the challenges / factors, if any, you have encountered in reaching an audience that is reflective of Boston residents.	Have you used or considered youth engagement strategies, programs for your projects? If yes, what kind of strategies? If not, why not?
4/17/2023 9:08:53	Send postcards; post flyers; accept emailed comments; host "pop-up" drop-in sessions on outside on the street that are advertised but also can intercept people walking by; special meetings with stakeholders;	When hosting public meetings/ open houses, only certain people show up. Similarly with encouraging people to submit feedback online via email or a survey. Only certain people respond, often people with the most passionate opinion, or who have some civic literacy, or who have the time/capacity to engage. Research has shown that at least for public meetings, white/male/homeowners show up in disproportionate numbers. My colleagues try different strategies to make public meetings more accessible: host in the evening or a weekend, provide free dinner and/or childcare, provide interpretation, provide a hybrid or virtual option, etc.	I've worked at the youth LTR programs with BPL that the AT team hosted last summer. I also think we cater to kids a tiny bit with our pop-up events -- providing snacks like juice boxes, chalk art, "draw your ideal street" activities. I don't think I've considered using more robust youth engagement strategies I guess because it feels like an extra layer of effort when my/our team's capacity is already so limited.
4/29/2023 0:00:42	I have used a number of different outreach strategies on my projects. These have included everything from traditional public meetings, to educational exhibits that also provide opportunities for feedback, to smaller community conversations where residents are paid for their time. One of the consultant groups I work with also specializes in youth outreach, and they have done educational lessons in classrooms about projects and to collect feedback, as well as facilitated youth-led engagement events such as one that had information but also free food and a DJ.	It can be very hard to reach youth and young adults without a very directed engagement strategy. There seems to be a dynamic where these folks don't always understand that their voices are also valuable in planning processes - not just the voices of elders. After all, they are the ones who will live with the changes for years to come! I have also often observed that younger folks may be hesitant to speak up in more traditional public meeting settings that involve public speaking.	Yes! We have worked with a local community engagement firm to design youth-focused engagement activities. These have included large events with educational materials, food, and music; in-classroom lessons and feedback sessions conducted in classrooms during the school day; and youth-led engagement committees that have helped direct planning involvement efforts.
5/20/2023 14:43:09	To plan the expansion of new bike share stations in Boston, we have provided surveys of potential locations made available both digitally and in person, and occasionally through pop-up/ambassador-style outreach. Surveys are distributed through local neighborhood organizations, advocacy organizations, and on social media. In addition we host open house and/or workshop-style events where residents can drop in to learn about how we plan new bike share stations, to discuss with neighbors areas that would be good for new station sites, and provide feedback on sites that staff are considering.	We get lots of people participating when there is a particular individual/group that is strongly opposed to a particular site. Otherwise, turnout/response rate is generally pretty weak.	Yes! We have had young people from community-based, youth-serving organizations employed to conduct surveys in their neighborhoods, and to provide their own input on station planning.
5/22/2023 9:38:26	I have used a wide range of engagement strategies throughout my career. The ones that I find most effective are pop ups at well-attended events organized by other entities that have strong community ties and small-group conversations with target audiences. In both of these strategies, there is an ability to proactively seek out participation by the audiences most in need of being reached. Most of my safe routes to school work has been completed on the infrastructure side of of the MA program, and so outreach was primarily with school administrators. For the MA statewide bike plan completed several years ago, we did host youth focus groups to better understand the biking patterns and barriers for middle and high-school aged kids, which was actually very informative. Translating what we learned from those conversations into actionable policies and programs was of course a challenge because of limited resources and the somewhat limited ability for the State to control issues outside of their jurisdiction. In another project I worked on in the last year, we spent a lot of resources on custom-produced media (videos, radio ads, paid media) to help promote a survey. We did see a significant increase in youth participation compared to previous surveys in the same area with these methods. We also worked with a local, trusted group of community organizers to establish a committee of paid residents who helped promote the project, acted in the video productions, and participated in focus group sessions to help guide the project. This group specifically included several youth participants (and their parents) because kids were a key demographic we were aiming to uplift in the project.	Time, resources, and well-established community connections have been the most challenging factors affecting representative engagement in my career. Tight schedules and limited budgets for things like food or participation stipends/incentives has made it more difficult to engage with groups outside of those who are already likely to participate, who tend to be whiter, older, have higher incomes, and skew toward homeowners. Another challenge is that engagement is often led by a workforce that often doesn't reflect the target audience or have strong community ties to the target audience. When ties to specific communities are strong, it is easier to engage.	yes, see response to first question. I think the key with kids are 1. provide food, cash, or some kind of incentive; 2. keep it relatively short and to the point; 3. build the engagement into an activity they are already doing; make it relevant to whatever they care about and not just about the specific topic.

Appendix B

Survey of the Program Representatives

Timestamp	Which program do you represent?	Does your program / curriculum have intergenerational learning component? If yes, how / where is it expressed? If not, what may be preventing this component to be part of your program / curriculum?	Does your program / curriculum have civic engagement component? If yes, how / where is it expressed? If not, what may be preventing this component to be part of your program / curriculum?	Does your program / curriculum have place-based learning component? If yes, how / where is it expressed? If not, what may be preventing this component to be part of your program / curriculum?	Does your program / curriculum have participatory design component? If yes, how / where is it expressed? If not, what may be preventing this component to be part of your program / curriculum?
5/8/2023 16:29:47	[test]	[test]	[test]	[test]	[test]
5/9/2023 15:40:53	Y-PLAN	Yes, Y-PLAN is centered around youth	Yes, the entire Y-PLAN curriculum is a civic engagement process	yes, its all place-based	yes, it is all focused around key concepts of participatory design All of this information and far more details can be found in our publicly accessible toolkit - https://y-plan.berkeley.edu/toolkit/ with more details in our CC+S website - https://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/major-initiatives/y-plan/
5/23/2023 19:19:57	2	Not at the moment. Our workshop program is very small - we teach kids basics of urban planning and street design, the workshop series is between 6 and 9 sessions, and we only have a few staffers available that are between the ages of 30 and 45. We will be experimenting with how to further enhance and expand the program, and if it happens, I can see more opportunities for intergenerational learning.	Yes. Students get to present their proposed work to the elected officials/local community board/transportation government officials and ask for support of the project	Yes. Students are tasked with redesigning a street next to their school. They do observations to identify traffic safety issues, collect speeds, measure the street. If/once the project is in construction, they get to observe and sometimes participate in certain parts of the construction process	Yes. Students develop their design proposals for the street that is the focus of their work on a given year. in close coordination with city planners from School safety unit at DOT.

Appendix C

Supporting Visuals In The Survey Used To Collect Qualitative Data

According to Tsiloni et al (2023),

Intergenerational learning means “people of different ages engage in meaningful and mutually beneficial activities, aimed at developing knowledge, skills, and values.”

Because intergenerational learning is a tool to combat inequity, I include intergenerational learning as a criteria for evaluation of the programs.

As defined by Pearlman-Avni & Grayevsky (2019), “Civic engagement refers to concern for society and social justice, and an individual’s knowledge, attitudes, and abilities, which enable positive and active involvement in the local community and the wider society.”

Components of civic engagement can include some or all of the following: a knowledge about functions of the government; participation in the politics; possession of values such as a sense of commitment to society; and recognition of social injustice and a wish to change it.

Research by Guajarado & Rauh (2021) shows that young citizens, who are prepared to engage in local civic affairs, contribute greatly to a healthier and sustainable community; have valuable and unique perceptions of their community; and care for social equity and justice in community development and resilience.

Place-based learning, also known as place-based education in pedagogy, is linked to active and collaborative learning and a site-specific learning resource (Cohen & Korintus, 2016).

Traditionally, this approach taps into local history, culture, and local economic activities, and the context of individuals living locally. The American educator John Dewey (1916-1997), as well as Soviet Psychologist and the originator of Sociocultural Theory of Cognitive Development, Lev Vygotsky, were the first thinkers of contextualizing place-based learning (Cohen & Korintus 2016).

Moreover, Smith and Sobel (2010) point out that although place-based learning may be perceived as a pedagogical approach for rural schools, in the United States “some of the most exciting examples of place- and community-based education are flourishing in inner-city schools.”

As Belgrave et al (2022) recap, “Participatory design is a powerful tool for creating culturally situated interventions that bridge gaps in research applicability, inclusivity, and effectiveness.”

Participatory design (PD), as a human-centered approach, that enables stakeholders to gather together and engage as a pluralistic community to work on co-creating designs for a variety of things, thus giving participants an agency and ability to design more reusable and culturally-relevant “artifacts for, with, and by those who will use them” (Di Salvo, 2017, p4).

Appendix D

Summative Content Analysis - Results Overview

Program / Curriculum	Concept	Summative Content Analysis - presence & occurrences	Summative Content Analysis - examples
Safe Routes to School MA: Bike & Pedestrian Safety Workshops	Intergenerational Learning	4	"Train the Trainer Workshops," "Adult Mentor Model" "Walk in Your Community", and parent slip
	Civic Engagement	1	Lesson plan "Walking in Your Community," Social Studies Lessons
	Place-Based Learning	1+	<i>The whole curriculum is set at a school and school's vicinity</i>
	Participatory Design	0	
NYC DOTs Student Workshop Series	Intergenerational Learning	3	Session 2 - Field visit; Session 4 - DOT returns with proposed design, Session 6 - Students help present
	Civic Engagement	2	Session 2 - Field visit, Session 6 Student shelp present
	Place-Based Learning	1+	<i>The whole curriculum is set at a school and school's vicinity</i>
	Participatory Design	2	Session 2, Session 3
Y-PLAN	Intergenerational Learning	2	Module 1, Module 4
	Civic Engagement	3	Module 1, Module 4, Module 5
	Place-Based Learning	3	Module 2, Module 3, Module 5
	Participatory Design	2	Module 2, Module 3
Total occurrences of the concepts among the three programs (based on the available open-source materials):	Intergenerational Learning	9	
	Civic Engagement	7+	
	Place-based Learning	5+	
	Participatory Design	4	

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Anna Jacobs

02/06/2023



Emanuele Bardone

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