

# ISSA Proceedings 2014 ~ Argumentation From Analogy In Migrants' Decisions

*Abstract:* Basing on the Argumentum Model of Topics (AMT) within the general framework of a pragma-dialectical viewpoint on argumentation, this paper analyses the role of argumentation from analogy in international migrants' decision-making processes on the basis of a corpus of interviews to migrant mothers resident in the greater London area. Reasoning from analogy allows evaluating pragmatic decisions – such as leaving one's home country, staying over in a foreign country, etc. – in terms of feasibility and reasonableness.

*Keywords:* Argumentation from analogy, loci, international migration, migration strategy, inner argumentation, functional genus.

## 1. Introduction

In the framework of analysis of contextualised argumentative discourse, this paper approaches argumentation from analogy in international migrants' decision making processes. International migration is a phenomenon which can be approached in a variety of dimensions and contexts, from families to institutions, to media portraits of migration. Amongst these contexts, a significant case in which an argumentative analysis may help shed light on the phenomenon of migration is *family and individual decision processes* concerning the decision to migrate or (not) to go back to one's home country.

In the literature on international migration, general terms to describe the reason why individuals migrate are defined *push/pull factors* or *migration determinants* (cf. Castles and Miller 2009: 21ff). These terms, however, only cover general concepts that tend to identify social tendencies without explaining individual trajectories and objectives. Other authors introduce the notion of *migration strategy* in order to more specifically account for the long-term goals and projects of the individuals who opt for international migration. For example, in studying strategies of Polish migrants to the UK, Eade (2007) distinguishes (amongst other categories) between *hamsters*, who consider their stay in the UK as a one-off act, intending to return to their home country as soon as they have accumulated

enough capital; and *searchers*, namely “those who keep their options deliberately open”, thus being characterized by “intentional unpredictability” (Eade 2007: 34). Approaching individual migration strategies from an argumentative viewpoint means casting a new light on the individual goals and reasons why each migrant chooses to start a migration trajectory, thus allowing a nuanced view of this phenomenon. With the intention of moving forward on this path, I consider international migration from an argumentative viewpoint in the framework of personal decision-making strategies, thus also approaching the field of *inner argumentation* (Greco Morasso 2013).

Amongst the possible argument schemes used by migrants in their inner argumentative dialogue, I claim that a significant role is played by argumentation from analogy, allowing migrants to compare their present situation, in which a decision whose effects are uncertain has to be faced, with other more familiar situations. In migrants’ decision making, the locus from analogy appears as a prominent feature, both in terms of frequency of occurrence and in strategic terms, because it is often subservient to the crucial decision of leaving one’s country as well as to equally important decisions, such as to return or not to return (Finch et al. 2009). Some examples of migrants’ argumentation from analogy have been shown in Greco Morasso (2013). In this paper, I will claim that analogical reasoning is never the ultimate basis on which a migrant decides to leave (or not to leave), but it is part of a more complex reasoning process. Arguments from analogy, in fact, seem to mainly serve the purpose of evaluating the feasibility of a certain migration strategy.

In order to discuss this topic, I will proceed as follows. Section 2 will situate this work in a theoretical framework on argumentation and, in particular, on the approach to argument schemes that will be adopted. The data on which the analysis is based will be presented in section 3 and analysed in section 4, while section 5 will present some general discussion about the main results of the analysis. Finally, possible openings of this research will be discussed in section 6.

## 2. *Theoretical background*

Considering migrants’ individual decisions brings us to consider a particular type of argumentation, namely what has been called *inner argumentation* (Billig 1996), *argumentative monologue* (Rigotti 2005, Rocci 2005) or “*debating with oneself*” (Dascal 2005). In fact, even though in the data analysed in this paper certainly portrait a social discussion between the researcher and the participants to this

research, the same data also provide clues to participants' inner dialogue, most especially concerning their crucial migration decisions (Greco Morasso 2013). In a pragma-dialectical framework, as in other approaches, argumentation per se is a social phenomenon (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004). However, despite clear differences between inner and social forms of argumentation, several authors have acknowledged the importance of inner argumentation in people's decision making processes. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958: 54) claim that inner deliberation should be legitimately considered as a form of argumentation; drawing on Isocrates, they observe that the arguments that we use in order to persuade others are the same as those we use when reflecting with ourselves. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004: 120) claim that "It is even possible for one person to assume the role of both protagonist and antagonist of one and the same standpoint and to conduct a *dialogue intérieur* by way of self-deliberation". Billig (1996: 142) argues that, in inner argumentation, "Part of the self turns itself into a harsh critic against the rest of the self" and that inner argumentative discussions count as a highly dramatic arena of argumentation.

According to Dascal (2005), there is evidence for contiguities and analogies between inner and social argumentation. *Contiguity* refers to the fact that dialogue with others and dialogue with oneself often follow each other in a temporal sequence. Thus, most especially in front of a difficult decision, one will reflect with herself and come to a provisional conclusion; then talk to family and/or friends; then, again, reconsider their advice and possible objections in personal thoughts before making a final decision... and so on. From this perspective, social and inner argumentation are contiguous segments of one and the same line. Analogies can be found in how social and inner argumentation are structured: both are informed by the presence of others' standpoints and arguments, as well as their refutation. Greco Morasso (2013) has shown how it is possible to reconstruct even complex argumentative discussions within inner dialogue[i]. The present paper contributes to this research stream by focusing on the role of argumentation from analogy inner argumentation in migrants' decisions.

In order to analyse argumentation from analogy, I will adopt the Argumentum Model of Topics (Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2006, 2010; Rigotti 2008, 2009), while at the same time situating my approach in the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation. The Argumentum Model of Topics will be used for the analysis of

argumentation from analogy, because it allows a specific consideration of the *inferential configuration* of argument schemes. The combination of pragma-dialectics and AMT has already proven fruitful in a number of previous works, amongst which Greco Morasso (2011) and Palmieri (2014).

In the AMT, analogy is considered as one of the *extrinsic* loci. Intrinsic and extrinsic loci, namely the two fundamental categories of the typology proposed by the AMT, are distinguished on the basis of a criterion based on the “proximity” of the (world of the) argument to the (world of the) considered standpoint. Such criterion has been first introduced by Cicero in his *Topica*, although its systematic application is initiated only later by Boethius (see the discussion in Rigotti & Greco, forthcoming). In the case of intrinsic loci, standpoint and argument belong to one and the same possible world. For example, if one says that a tree has fallen because of a violent thunderstorm[**ii**], the tree and the thunderstorm (efficient cause) belong to the same world. Contrastingly, with extrinsic loci, argument and the standpoint belong to different worlds. For example, with the *locus from the opposites*, we reason that one and the same thing cannot be A and non-A at the same time and under the same respect. Hence, Lisa cannot be in London and in Amsterdam on the same day and at the same time. “Lisa being in London” and “Lisa being in Amsterdam” are events that certainly do not belong to one and the same world; they belong to two different (and in this case alternative) possible worlds.

The same holds with analogy. For example, in the summer 2011, it was not rare to read in European newspapers the forecast that Italy was going to need a bailout loan soon. This forecast was sometimes motivated on the basis of the experience of Greece, a country which had needed a bailout in 2010. Such argument was obviously based on an analogy between these two countries; the latter, however, are obviously different under many respects, and “crisis in Italy” and “crisis in Greece” constitute two logically distinct worlds. In this case, these two worlds are not mutually exclusive; rather, they actually co-exist.

Several authors have considered how the main problem with argumentation from analogy is comparability of the concerned entities or states of affairs. Some argue that argumentation from analogy is built on the basis of a *functional genus*, which is not a genus in the “traditional” Aristotelian sense of this word, but rather a pragmatic category under which both entities are said to fall (see in particular Macagno 2014). In an AMT perspective, the functional genus is functional

precisely because it connects two possible worlds, working on an extrinsic locus such as analogy is. Following up on this view of analogy, as Juthe (2005: 9) remarks, “Two things seemingly very dissimilar with few properties in common can still be analogous in important respects while two other objects with many properties in common are not analogous in the way one superficially thinks”.

More specifically, in his account of argument schemes, Whately (1828[1963]: 85-86) considers that in argumentation from analogy there is an explicit reference to a *common class* under which both analogues fall. This author adds that this common class (which arguably corresponds to the notion of functional genus) is actually a *relation*: “The two things (*viz.* the one *from* which, and the one to which, we argue) are not, necessarily, themselves alike, but stand in similar *relations* to some other things; or, in other words, that the *common genus* which they both fall under, consists in a relation. Thus an egg and a seed are not in themselves alike, but bear a like relation, to the parent bird and to the future nestling, on the one hand, and to the old and young plant on the other, respectively; this relation being the genus which both fall under: and many Arguments might be drawn from this Analogy (Whately 1828[1963]: 90-91). Whately’s intuition, which we might represent as a proposition (parent bird : future nestling = old plant : young plant), has been then called *analogy based on proportion or proportional analogy* (see the discussion in Rigotti 2014).

### 3. Migrants’ decision-making processes: empirical data

The corpus which this paper will be drawing on has been collected in the framework of the project “*Migrants in transition: an argumentative perspective*” [iii] and consists in the transcriptions of 29 reconstructive interviews to international mothers in the process of migrating and settling down in London. In these interviews, participants reconstruct how they lived a moment of rupture and the following transition a posteriori (Zittoun 2009: 415ff). One of the main goals of these interviews (conducted between September 2010 and March 2011) was to provide an empirical basis for the study of the boundary between social argumentation and inner forms of debate and self-controversy (see Greco Morasso, 2013).

Twenty-nine migrant women with children, coming from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (aged 25 to 50) have been interviewed about their experience of international migration. At the time of the study, all participants had been living in the greater London area for a period of one to twenty-two

years. The interviews lasted from 32 to 90 minutes; they were all recorded and transcribed according to the standards of conversation analysis adapted to the needs of an argumentative analysis (for a discussion on this aspect, see Greco Morasso 2011).

In a perspective of socio-cultural psychology, migration can bear one or more ruptures (Kadianaki 2010; Lutz 2013) which require adaptation. Because motherhood may potentially amplify the ruptures of migration (Sigad & Eisikovits 2009; Tummala-Narra 2004) and, therefore, make involved decisions more complex, I have chosen to focus on pragmatic argumentation by *migrant mothers*, who need to take the wellbeing of their children and family into account when they design migration strategies.

#### 4. *Argumentation from analogy in migrants' decisions*

Due to the ruptures that a migration decision introduces in a person's experience, migrants face a new experience, which puts them to decide under conditions of uncertainty when they make their decisions. In such situations, the prominence of argumentation from analogy is not surprising. In fact, because analogy permits to compare different worlds and highlight their comparability and differences, it may orientate migrants, helping them to figure out how their migration projects will end up, by comparing them to other similar cases.

Whately's 1828[1963] observation about the relational nature of the functional genus in analogy appears particularly useful in this respect. Analogy would be represented as a sort of proportional reasoning, which, in the case of migrants, could be represented as follows:

Person x : Migration situation 1 = Person y : Migration situation 2

In this formula, Migration situation 2 (*phoros*, in terms of Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958) is already known (i.e. it is a world in the past) while Migration situation 1 (*theme*, in terms of Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958) is the unknown experience that awaits the migrants who needs to decide. This proportion qualifies the functional genus of "international migration experience", which is implicitly advocated by participants when introducing this type of arguments.

In the extracts collected from my corpus, I have identified two main types of analogical reasoning relative to migrants' decisions and to their evaluation in

terms of feasibility. In the former case, Migration situation 2 has been lived by someone else, who might be family or friends, or somebody whom the participant in question knows. In the latter case, Migration situation 2 has been lived by the participant herself in the past. I will now briefly present these two types of analogical reasoning and then focus my analysis on some of the most representative examples.

#### *4.1 Migration situation 2 lived by someone else*

The first extract is taken from an interview to Katarina, a young migrant from Poland who is working in London and is mother to a young girl, who was born in the UK. Katarina elaborates on the reason why she left Poland for London. If the main reason of her move was economic - i.e. searching for a job - still she confesses that the experience of a friend who had done the same thing was inspirational to her: "I thought oh she she did it why (.) why cannot I [...] do the same?" (lines 6-8 and 10).

This type of reasoning, in which a migrant compares her experience to that of someone else who has lived a similar situation, has been very often found in this corpus. A very similar case is made by Kate from New Zealand: "[...] most of my friends as I said had done it already had this experience before (.) and they were already back to New Zealand (.) a lot of them were married ( ) and I decided to yeah so". Also similar to Katarina's case is Linda from Switzerland, who moved to the UK because her husband found a job in a prestigious UK university. She reasoned out that she could adapt to a new life in England, because her husband had done the same thing some years before, when he followed her from The Netherlands to Switzerland. When asked if her mixed marriage helped her, she replies as follows: "[...]I think (.) the problem is I don't know thinking that in any case he did it already this step coming to Switzerland fro- from Holland he had already: to adapt a bit to a new life[iv]".

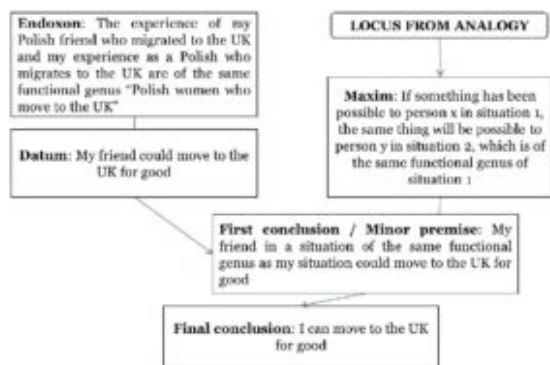


Figure 1: AMT representation of Katarina's argument

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The AMT analysis of Katarina's argumentation from analogy is represented in Figure 1. The locus from analogy, as any locus, does not directly intervene in the inferential configuration of arguments. In other words, loci are not immediate constituents of argument schemes. Rather, they guarantee a principle of support (in terms of Garssen 2001) linking arguments to their standpoint. Loci are the basis on which the procedural component of argument schemes is founded (Rigotti and Greco Morasso 2010). In particular, different maxims can be drawn from each locus, each representing an "if...then" inferential connection working as a major premise. In Katarina's argumentation (Figure 1), the relevant maxim is constructed on the basis of the above mentioned proportion between her situation (Migration situation 1) and her friend's past situation (Migration situation 2): "If something has been possible to person x in situation 1, the same thing will be possible to person y in situation 2, which is of the same functional genus of situation 1". Other maxims are also possible for the locus from analogy, as for example "If two entities are analogous, they need to be judged analogously", which counts as analogy based on a rule of justice, i.e. analogy combined with the principle of consistency (Garssen 2009: 136).

A maxim, together with a minor premise, activates a syllogistic procedure which allows drawing a Final conclusion. Such conclusion coincides with the standpoint to be defended, namely "I can move to the UK for good" (hence the name "final conclusion"), as argument schemes by definition count as inferential moves backing up standpoints in argumentation.

Yet, as it clearly appears if looking as Figure 1, while maxims are abstract inferential rules, which might be valid in different contexts, minor premises need



to derive their validity from some further backing because they are never justified in themselves. In this case, the minor premise “My friend in a situation of the same functional genus as my situation could move to the UK for good” needs to be confirmed in reality. Drawing on this consideration, the AMT model highlights that there is also a *material component* in each and every argument scheme (Rigotti and Greco Morasso 2010), which is represented on the left side of the quasi-y inferential configuration in Figure 1. The material component is constituted by another syllogistic reasoning. The major premise in the material component is constituted by an *endoxon*, an Aristotelian term indicating an opinion that is accepted by the relevant audience, namely the interlocutors who are jointly participating in the argumentative discussion in question. Endoxa are general propositions concerning knowledge or values, and their validity is situated in a particular conversational context. In Katarina’s argument, for example, the endoxon is “The experience of my Polish friend who migrated to the UK and my experience as a Polish who migrates to the UK are of the same functional genus “Polish women who move to the UK”. The functional genus is constructed within the endoxon, thereby postulating comparability between Katarina’s situation and her friend’s. A minor premise of factual nature (datum) is then associated to the endoxon; this minor premise (“My friend could move to the UK for good”) acknowledges that her friend had a positive experience when migrating to the UK, which is implicitly conveyed by the term “inspiration” used to describe her. Endoxon and datum, if combined, bring to the conclusion that “My friend in a situation of the same functional genus as my situation could move to the UK for good”, which explains the intertwining between material and procedural components in argumentation. The connection between the procedural and material components also provides the required contextual backing to the procedural component.

Note that in this case, as in the cases of Kate and Linda mentioned above, the standpoint is not immediately pragmatic; it is rather an *evaluation of feasibility* of migration to the UK. In other words, Katarina did not leave Poland because her friend had; she left Poland in search of a job and of a new opportunity for her life. Her friend having already made a similar experience was inspirational in the sense that Katarina knew that this migration project was realistic and (possibly) satisfying. Evaluating if something is possible is a form of knowledge-oriented argumentation, yet subservient to a pragmatic decision (whether to leave or not).

#### 4.2 *Migration situation 2 lived by the migrant herself*

In the second type of analogical reasoning found in my corpus, Migration situation 2 is lived by the migrant herself in the past. This happens because some of the participants had experience of living abroad before their move to the UK. In these cases, it can still be said that analogy is built on the comparison between possible worlds, because present and past are compared, as well as different destinations. Extract 2 reports a passage of the interview to Linda from Switzerland, already mentioned in section 4.1. After discussing her husband's experience as a Dutch migrant to Switzerland (see above), she moves to build another analogy relative to her personal experience.

##### *Excerpt 2*

Linda

11 [...] (.) and in any case the experience being from Ticino is a bit  
12 different because even if you stay in your country (.) eh going to the  
13 French or the German parts of Switzerland was a cultural change in any  
14 case: another language other traditions respectively influenced by  
15 France or Germany ehm (.) I don't know I found it in any case almost  
16 like going abroad even if you stay in your country (.) stamps are the  
17 same your bank is the same but (.) language and cultures are different  
18 (.) and (.) ( ) it's fairly peculiar you know =

Linda considers her present move from Switzerland to the UK as substantially similar to the move she made when leaving the Ticino Canton, where she comes from, to settle in a city in the German part of Switzerland. Interestingly, she draws such analogy even though reflecting on all possible differences that can be found between international migration and migration from one to the other linguistic areas in Switzerland. She argues that, while "stamps are the same your bank is the same" (lines 16-17), i.e. the institutional framework does not change, languages and cultures are different (lines 14 and 17) because of the traditions respectively influenced by France (in the French speaking cantons) or Germany (in the German speaking cantons, see lines 14-15). This represents a meta-reflection on comparability, which has been often found in the interviews where analogy is built on the basis of a participant's previous experience. A similar case has been found, for example, in the interview to Lucy from St. Lucia, who compares the time when she left for the UK to a previous moment in which she left St. Lucia in order to attend university in Jamaica. She says that her

experience in Jamaica had toughened her up and this made it easier to leave for the UK later. Lucy also argues that Jamaica and the UK are comparable, despite all obvious differences, because of the similar financial conditions needed to live in these two countries: “I mean in some ways it’s [Jamaica is] like England because (.) you need quite a lot of money for you to be comfortable there”.



Figure 2: AMT representation of Linda's argument (adapted from Greco Morasso 2013)

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Both in the case of Linda and in that of Lucy, meta-argumentation is advanced because the attribution of a functional genus is not taken for granted. As a matter of fact, a functional genus is pragmatic and it is not necessarily accepted as it is; an example of this is discussed in Xenitidou and Greco Morasso (2014), who analyse a focus group of Greek residents discussing the effects of immigration to their home country. Within this multi-party discussion, an analogy between Greek immigrants to Germany, on the one hand, and Eastern European immigrants to Greece, on the other hand, is drawn, then refuted, then drawn again. If these examples are considered from the viewpoint of the Argumentum Model of Topics, it clearly appears that it is the endoxon to be discussed, because the endoxon is where the functional genus is constructed as something that can be taken for granted. This appears in Figure 1 as well as in Figure 2, where the AMT representation of Linda's argument is proposed.

## 5. Discussion

In all cases considered, argumentation from analogy is used to support knowledge-oriented argumentation aimed at the evaluation of the feasibility and/or reasonableness of a migration project. This amounts to typically knowledge-oriented standpoints. Such knowledge-oriented standpoints, however,

are always subservient to justify a pragmatic standpoint concerning a migration decision, normally justified a posteriori (after or during a transition process). In all cases, the decision to migrate has been necessarily made under conditions of uncertainty, because migrants cannot but imagine what they are going to live in the “new world”, but they cannot anticipate their experience.

Now, argumentation from analogy never represents the main reason why they leave their home country. Intuitively, one would not leave his or her home country just because someone else has left. There must be some other profound reason why a person is thinking to leave in the first place. From an argumentative viewpoint, ultimate reasons to migrate are likely to be supported by means-end argumentation (locus from final cause), based on a series of goals ranging from economic reasons, to a desire to improve one’s conditions of life, to a marriage, and so on (see Greco, submitted). Argumentation from analogy comes into play when participants ask themselves whether a given decision will actually be feasible for them. Analogy, thus, works as a side-argument, seemingly answering the question: is it reasonable for me to think that I will make it? Will I cope with this?

What said is important for a global evaluation of this type of argumentation. If it is true that the maxim “If something was possible for a person in a migration situation of the same functional genus as mine, then it is possible for me” is weak under some respect, because things can always change, and the comparability between the two migration situations could be questioned, it is true that migrants may lack other ways to study the feasibility of their project. As it happens with examples, analogies of this kind are valid as far as they show *how things could be*, of course without cogently proving what will happen in the future, which would be impossible.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper I have analysed argumentation from analogy in migrants’ decision processes. I have shown that the locus from analogy is often used in order to support a knowledge-oriented standpoint, concerning the feasibility and reasonableness of a migration project. In the cases observed, this type of knowledge-oriented argumentation is generally subservient to pragmatic argumentation, more specifically concerning whether to migrate or not. This recurrent combination of means-end argumentation (locus from final cause) and locus from analogy in the specific context of migrants’ individual decisions brings

us close to the notion of *argumentative pattern*, introduced by van Eemeren and Garssen (2014) as a characterization of institutionalised argumentative discourse. In the cases discussed in this paper, however, institutional constraints are limited, while it could be hypothesized that the pattern observed is linked to the type of decision which migrants need to make. The possibility to interpret the observed regularity as an argumentative pattern characterizing migration projects, however, is in need for further exploration at the theoretical level.

Sign	Explanation
[h]	Lengthening of preceding vowel is indicated by colon
A:nd	Longer lengthening of preceding vowel
(.)	Pause of one second or less
(:)	Pause of more than one second (the duration in seconds is indicated)
?	Rising intonation (questions)
/	Slightly rising intonation (suspension)
!	Falling intonation (exclamations)
<b>YOU SHOULD</b>	Majorcules indicate emphasis
(looking at J)	Relevant non-verbal elements and actions are indicated in italic inner brackets
[ ]	Omitted from transcription
(.)	Unaltable/uncomprehensible

Table 1: Transcription symbols

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Another theoretical aspect which could be developed as a follow-up of this paper concerns the relation between argumentation from analogy and *framing*. The connection between framing and argumentation has been explored in previous works (Greco Morasso 2009, van Eemeren 2010, Greco Morasso 2012, Bigi & Greco Morasso 2012). In the specific case of analogy, the construction of a functional genus, which is by definition a pragmatic move, could be interpreted as a process of framing in the context of an arguer's strategic manoeuvring.

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### NOTES

**i.** Greco (submitted) analyses migrants' pragmatic argumentation in inner dialogue, while Perrin & Zampa (submitted) approach this topic in a fairly different context, as they describe journalists' inner argumentative reflections while making decisions about their newspapers' articles.

**ii.** In this case, we are on the boundary between argumentation and explanation of a physical fact.

**iii.** The project was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation

(PBTIP1-133595). Research was based at University College London (2010-2011) and at the University of Surrey, UK (2011-2012). See <https://sites.google.com/site/migrantsandmothers>

**iv.** In the case of Linda, the interview was in Italian and has been translated into English. For an AMT analysis of this argument, see Greco Morasso (2013).

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