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excerpt

# CONSERVATION— CONSUMPTION

## PRESERVING THE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE VALUES

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Editors



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This book presents the papers written by 33 participants following the 6th Workshop on Conservation, organised by the Conservation Network of the European Association for Architectural Education in A Coruña, Galicia, Spain in 2017. All papers have been peer-reviewed. The Workshop was attended by 51 participants from the following countries: Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom

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## “RECORDING IS NOT REMEMBERING”<sup>1</sup>. CONSUMPTION AND CONSERVATION BETWEEN VISUAL AND FACTUAL EXPERIENCE IN CULTURAL TOURISM

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*It matters not whether those fragments often deal with an intertwining of stories that have dissolved and become elusive; their character is always that of visual, tactile, evidence, as if, sentence after sentence, they invited us to inspect with our eye or the tips of our fingers, a surface that would declare itself for what it is, before and over and above any meaning*

Calasso 2005: 77-78

### **Premise. On the Camino (Fig. 1)**

Walking along a stretch of the Camino de Santiago is a multiple experience that evokes social, territorial, economic and cultural aspects. It opens the perspective for a renewal of the knowledge of the theories of heritage and introduces a reflection on the borders (a new balance) between theoretical issues and heritage practices, a boundary primarily marked by the phenomenon of tourism.

The Camino de Santiago is considered by many people, most of all, a spiritual and religious experience. It reveals its authenticity in dealing with the real spiritual essence of the path, although it consists of a set of architectural elements that reveal the presence of a local community in which it is involved. During the Camino dealing with the balance between the intangible experience and the tangible presence of the landscape is very deep, because the intangible set of values is deeply intensified by the personal experience which it involves.

This personal, intangible, experience is not completely bolstered by the acknowledgement of an aesthetical value (as if we were in a Church, or looking a masterpiece of architecture) but we may define it like a



FIG. 1. Landscape view. The Camino of Santiago de Compostela, 2017.



FIG. 2. A farm.

sort of visual experience well expressed in the contemporaneity by the use of the images through the social networks. It is mostly linked to the experience in itself as a factual reality, because it is expressed by the pure essence of 'being there', to live the presence in the path. We may refer to the well known definition of Brandi connecting these two poles, the visual experience and what we may call the factual experience, or, to use Brandi's words, the "historical instance

that reflects its emergence as a human product at a certain time and in a certain place"<sup>2</sup>.

Focusing our attention on the set of values of the factual experience in the path, the tangible presence that is presented to the visitor is the encounter with people from a local rural community, vernacular architecture (such as the Galician *Hòrreos*), and a natural landscape. In this balance the set of emotional and spiritual values for whom who feel the presence of the intangible value connected to religious or spiritual aim is stronger than the architectural or landscape experience.

### On Authenticity (Fig. 2)

This consideration about the relationship between tangible and intangible leads us to consider where the authenticity of the experience of the Camino originates. In considering the doctrinal documents (ICOMOS 1964, ICOMOS 1994, ICOMOS 2014), the "understanding of authenticity plays a fundamental role in all scientific studies of cultural heritage, in conservation and restoration planning, as well as within the inscription procedures used for the World Heritage Convention and other cultural heritage inventories" (ICOMOS 1994).

So we must deal with the concept of authenticity in cultural heritage even if it is in some way difficult.

From a theoretical point of view, looking at the role of the images in cultural tourism (d'Eramo 2017) the relation between matter and memory as exposed in Bergson's theory (Bergson 1959) could help us to understand the process of acknowledgement of what we call authenticity in tangible and intangible perceptive experience. We may argue that the values referred to the visual experience are in fact the outcome of the subject's perception, but such perception is inseparable from memory. According to Bergson, memory communicates the subjective character of perception, but, Bergson states, since memory has the role to complete the perception of the matter, this means that memory, in a certain form, must be independent from matter, and therefore independent from the object in itself.

We might say that Bergson's reasoning tells us that experience of the authenticity of an object is linked to a perception, but according to him this perception is subjective (or linked to the individual memory). So the authenticity is linked to the value that object assumes for the subject, that is that authenticity could be hardly identified as an universal value.

For a critical approach to the role of the visual experience connected to the cultural heritage we may refer to Bergson looking at the role that subjective perception has on the process of acknowledgment of the object as a work of art, as Cesare Brandi describes. In



particular, Bergson says that the perception of an object is subjective, since recognition/acknowledgment takes place via 'memory-images'.

So the process of acknowledgment described by Cesare Brandi is related on one end, from the point of view of perception via memory-images, to the aesthetical value, but on the other hand, looking at the importance of the role of the individual memory in the process of perception, to the historical value. This is the link between the act of the acknowledgment described by Brandi with the process of perception described by Bergson. This means that the images correlated to the perception have a meaningful role for the acknowledgment of reality.

Starting out from this premise, the question rightly remains as to the type of relation that obtains between perception of a place and the place itself, or, rather, between immaterial experience of the place, visual experience and factual experience. On the plane of speculation, the question remains as to what authenticity is and as to what values authenticity resides in, if the experience of the place is subjective and the matter of the place transcendent via images.

If we consider the Camino an extreme case, where the factual experience of the place is connected to the memory-images of the history of the Camino, we may affirm that authenticity is linked to the acknowledgment of the Camino as a set of immaterial values related to the factual experience of walking and looking at the elements by which is composed. Or, better, the process of acknowledgement of the Camino as a Cultural Heritage is connected more to the 'memory of the place' (the subjective intangible experience) than to the place in itself (the factual experience). For a conservative point of view becomes crucial to understand which are the elements of the subjective intangible experience of the Camino that reveals is 'authenticity' in order to preserve that.

### **On recognisability/acknowledgement between local and universal (Fig. 3)**

This premise leads us to reflect upon UNESCO's conclusion that the "cultural heritage of each is the cultural heritage of all" (ICOMOS 1994). However, if this statement is to truly reflect reality, the community must divest itself of its local identity in order to recognise the cultural asset as a supranational asset. This element in the UNESCO charters provides the bedrock for the process according to which the cultural asset becomes an attestation the authenticity of which is recognised by diverse communities. The cultural asset thus becomes a transnational concept, with this in part clashing with the definition of authenticity as an element that must be local<sup>3</sup>.

There thus emerges the first important element in the relationship between tangible and intangible: the equilibrium between universal recognisability and local authenticity (Musso 2014).

The European Landscape Convention defines the landscape as "expression of the diversity" and "foundation" of the identities of peoples<sup>4</sup>.

There is therefore a tie between identity and acknowledgement, in that, while identity resides within the cultural asset, the process of acknowledgment is external. On consideration of the European convention on the World Heritage (UNESCO 1972) and the recent provisions concerning the Historic Urban Landscape (UNESCO 2011) we note the will to extend the notion of cultural landscape to include a broader urban and landscape context. Within this cultural context, the problem of recognition on the part of the community



FIG. 3. A memorial.



FIG. 4. The matter of the buildings.

deepens considerably, since, where there is no acknowledged aesthetical or historical component a third component is to be found, namely the cultural asset's social recognisability.

This process reveals a tendency to also protect a set of values that express political and social recognition of the cultural asset, as the need to express values that exist over and above the physical component of the asset and its geographic or cultural position. From this angle, we note the extreme case of the Memory of the World Register (UNESCO, 1992), whose task is to preserve historical memories of events via conservation of the documentation attesting to such events. This need arises out of social clashes and the will of some to delete certain facts from the annals of history. We see this trend exemplified by inclusion, in order to combat the theories of the deniers of the Diary of Anne Frank as a historical document<sup>5</sup> (and not as a book of a literary nature).

In regard to this equilibrium, Bergson's 'memory-images' obtain as a set of aesthetical, historical and social values, that, while linked to the individual, are rooted in the pertaining community, of which they are an expression.

We thus have a dual role played by the subject producing the 'memory-images' and the influence exerted by the community upon the subject as expression of a collective dimension. In such polarities between the individual and the collective, the 'memory-images' expresses the perception of the individual as part of his/her belonging to a given community. This perception, as the Bergson's theory explain, is a balance between the factual experience of the present and the recollected experience (or subjective intangible experience) of the memory. The polarity between belonging to a community and the individual identity is difficult to identify precisely (as the Anna Frank's diary testify). So the legislative regulation has, from this point of view, a political and social role in order to guide and to rule the act of preservation for a community.

### **On matter and ‘memory-images’ (Fig. 4)**

This perceptual origin raises the question of what happens during the process of conservation. After the process of acknowledgment of the set of values to be preserved, conservation, as a physical material act (we may think of the physical conservation of the Diary of Anne Frank), raises the issue of ‘what’ is to be conserved, and ‘how’ (Fiorani 2014), since, as Cesare Brandi puts it, it is possible to “restores only the matter of the work of art”<sup>6</sup>.

But as we tried to underline in the passage before if we refer again to the act of acknowledgment of the reality via memory-images, it emerges that matter is the vehicle for definition of a subjective perception born out of ‘memory-images’.

The project therefore becomes the place in which matter assumes the social role of ‘memory-image’ for a community. We therefore bear witness to a process whereby ‘authenticity’ no longer resides in matter but rather in the power of matter to evoke a ‘memory-image’ that can be socially acknowledged. We have thus identified a second element – the relationship between authenticity, interpreted as the act of a social recognition of a cultural value, the matter itself and the role of the project.

### **On the subject, or on Cultural Tourism<sup>7</sup> (Fig. 5)**

If the project of conservation, from the point of view of the recognisability from a community, could become the link between matter, authenticity and social recognisability/acknowledgement of the cultural asset, the tourism, as a mass social system for the use of cultural assets could, over time, assume an increasingly preponderant role, because tourism represents the most widespread form of access and one of the major points set forth in the charters regards collective accessibility. The third element in the relationship between tangible and intangible therefore consists in the equilibrium for cultural assets to be obtained between conservation, accessibility and tourism (Musso 2017).

### **On Time (Fig. 6)**

Starting from the increasing role for the project in the strategy of acknowledgment of the value of a cultural heritage by the community, there is another element that is remarkable in the process of acknowledgment that is the presence of time, of the ‘poetic nature of architecture’ (Venezia 2010), that ensure the continuity for cultural heritage to empowered its communicative force not only over and above the uses emerging from time to time but also over and above the system of recognisable values to which it originally referred, since (over the time), the perception of the cultural object, even when in ruins, even when is completely abandoned, persists.

This means in the case of a conservation process for the Camino that, we may think that the uses of the spaces are less important than the power of the ‘poetic nature’ of the place over the time.

Time is the variable that confers authenticity on the cultural asset<sup>8</sup>. The existence of urban voids, lacerations, absences, and the presence/acceptance of imperfection denote human reality. Perfection, continuity and the absence of time denote the experience of shopping malls, and the Disneyfication of places and of society (Augé 1992; Augé 1997).

This element is applicable to the minute scale of the landscape of the Camino, in the sequence of minor physical elements, whether conserved or in ruins, as for example in the rustic dwellings, the walls separating lands, the Galician *Hórreos*, paving, the physical nature of the walls, roofing, stones, the memorial works appearing here and there along the



FIG. 5. Cultural Tourism.

FIGS. 6-7. Small Church of Cemetery.

Camino, the churches and so forth, which contribute to defining and communicating the presence of a community, a population, the history of a people, in the slow-moving time of progress along the route. A ‘pathetic’ condition<sup>9</sup> that expresses not only the physical dimension of objects but also the slow-moving traces of matter and of history that may be encountered along the Camino. This temporal condition, of a slow-moving progress, renders the elements of the Camino natural elements, and geographic in nature.

These elements are thus a part of the historic landscape as traces of the cultural landscape. However, the slow proceeding within the landscape cannot be codified in material terms nor can one provide a univocal definition of authenticity, since the landscape’s changeability – the slowness with which transformation takes place over time – constitutes the very condition of ‘authenticity’.

The complex temporal stratification of experiences provides proof of the actuality and universality of the landscape of the Camino since the reasons for use of the territory, the territory’s rustic nature, the presence of farms, the landscape’s actuality, remain, as the ‘pathetic’ condition of the traveller traversing the territory over the centuries.

### **On the relationship between tangible and intangible (Fig. 7)**

A system of values therefore emerges in view of which, for the relationship between tangible and intangible, problems of varying nature could be identified:

- equilibrium between universal recognisability and local authenticity;
- the relationship between authenticity, matter and project;
- the influence of tourism as a mass use-system of cultural assets;
- the dimension of time.



### **On the relationship between Project and Tourism on the Camino (Fig. 8)**

If we transfer to touristic use, the field of premises put forward up to this point, we may reflect on the meaning of the experience in cultural tourism.

We may say that when prevail a visual experience of the place rather than a factual ones, the cultural tourism experience is a kind of 'passive' experience that is typical in mass tourism fluxes.

Furthermore, touristic experience fulfils the premise of acknowledgement of a place as cultural asset, because a place that has been recognised as a place of cultural heritage (by international charters or by national laws) is universally acknowledged as touristic too and, in the meantime, it has become available to the community. On the basis of these premises, the elements of a conservative project for cultural heritage in the field of cultural tourism, should preserve the equilibria between authenticity, matter, project and time (Augé 1997) because there is a risk to delete the factual condition of the place to highlight the visual experience of the mass tourism fluxes. That is a sort of consumption of the cultural values and at the end of the material essence (the ipseity) of the place too.

Returning to experience in the Camino, this sort of consumption is not already been present because of the spiritual meaning of some gesture: the placing of a photograph of a relative so that he/she may receive grace, the experience of greeting pilgrims, in wishing others well for their walk, are all elements related to the fluxes of people, but as a result of a factual spiritual experience.

If the project open the Camino to the mass touristic experience, this spontaneous and deep reality would freeze these gestures, images, deleting their spontaneity and all the pictures, behaviour of people would become hyper-real – faded decalcomanias of authen-



FIG. 8. The matter of the buildings.



FIG. 9. Memory of pilgrims.

Next page:

FIGS. 10-11. The 'anthropological' place and the 'hypermodern' place.

tic actions, a form of cultural fetishism, because they would imitate e would not be the reality, fading the experience.

### **On the consumption of the heritage as a non-actual experience (Fig. 9)**

Tourism as a passive experience, whereby gestures become not authentic but mechanical – with no specific motivation, but rather undertaken merely to create postcard images of the past – produces a form of consumption of experience, leading to the cultural dissolution of experience. 'Non-actual' experience<sup>10</sup>.

We find here the conservation/consumption problem in our intangible and tangible heritage. Conservation of the intangible datum of experience may therefore lead to an a-historical falsification of experience itself, since the fragments that we read along the Camino underscore 'stories' – attestations that cannot be solely immaterial because they are conveyed by things that represent gestures. If the Cultural Object loses this gestural dimension, the object becomes mute, non-actual and unexpressed because it is no longer linked to the context in which it finds itself.

### **The 'anthropological' place and the 'hypermodern' place (Figs. 10-11)**

The Camino is now an 'anthropological' place. The dimension of tourism acts instead like a metamorphosis that necessitates extension of spaces for circulation, installation of localities for large-scale consumption, this entailing an experience of accelerated time that



clashes with the slow-moving experience of pilgrimage. These conditions mark out the path and transposition from the 'anthropological place' to the transitory place of the 'hypermodern' landscape (Augé 2012). This process is indicated by the distance between 'places' and 'non-places', or places in which immediately legible social relations do not find direct expression.

We thus arrive at a contradiction. Conservation of values considered universal, which, in the charters, also implies universal accessibility, leads to an experience of standardisation of the asset. On an operational level, the prime consequence is the creation of a 'hypermodern' place, arising out of the pressure of cultural tourism.

In this process of creation the 'anthropological'/local place becomes a 'hypermodern'/universal place, thus losing its authenticity, and create a process of consumption. This is not entirely happened along the Camino as a consequence of the spiritual aim of the path. A similarity to exemplify this concept is a comparison with the Churches now at the center of the touristic fluxes, the ones who are used with a religious purpose maintain the spirit of the place more than others in which there are some strategy of adoptive reuse or the abandoned ones (Fiorani, Kealy, Musso 2017).

If the aim of the charters is to conserve the *genius loci* as an 'anthropological place', conservation actions should transcend the material-immaterial dichotomy to embrace, and unify, in accordance with the idea of a method (Fiorani, Musso 2016) with outreach to political management of the territory in question, where the physical activities of conservation (the architectural project) are part of a programme of actions such as shall ensure the presence of the local community, in the absence of which the rites of the pilgrimage become non-actual, or, again, standardised as a touristic experience.

Conservation of the rural and physical dimension of *genius loci*, i.e. of their anthropological dimension, is possible only via a broad political and social management programme<sup>11</sup>.

When the approach to the project transposes the physical project of places – matter – into the agenda of cultural actions for management and provision of safeguards for local communities, individual architectural projects (concerning the matter of the Galician *Hòrreos*, or the farmhouse or the religious house) may diverge from the end use since all architectural works emerge as the satellites of a cultural system. Conservation of such works and/or (as an extreme measure) of their presence as a landscape ruin (Stone 2017) enhances the experience of the pilgrimage and does not interact negatively with this experience, since the said ruin becomes a part of the local architectonic idiom. Basically, it becomes a natural feature of the area<sup>12</sup> since political action aims to conserve a social system and a ‘slow-moving’ temporal dimension. The architectural project becomes an operational means to attain this end.

Facing the increasingly serious problems arising out of abandonment or neglect of our architectural heritage (industrial, religious, real-estate assets, etc.) draws our attention toward a process of metamorphosis, with conservation actions more and more explicitly reaching out toward the sphere of management and not just of design, so that the project may serve as a guide and/or horizon or prospect for the material conservation of locations.

In this sense, the physical consistency of the action of project may reassert itself with a shift toward the idea of care, a process directed toward accommodating current transformations with a view to the future (as opposed to the idea of re-establishing or rediscovering an identity/original nature that was lost, or the prospect even of reviving forms of vitality by now extinct) (Stone 2017).

If, on the one hand, the process of conservation, and therefore the project, remains an action linked to matter, to the plane of the tangible, on the other, if we refer to the plane of the intangible, and thus to the plane of the ‘gesture’, as defined above, the project transforms itself into a form of interaction of processes in which the programme of management of places – intellectual and policy guidance – is not something other than, extraneous to, the conservation project, but rather it interacts with this project in order to conserve the presence and vitality of the territory.

In this sense, the conservation project joins the plane of the intangible, because it is expression of a social process.

Hence, on the strength of this hypothesis, we need not be surprised to learn that the most successful experiments of the last few years started out from social occupation of sites, because they incarnate the spirit of the contemporaneity, the recognition of the social value of the intervention (via Tor Marancia in Rome; Teufelsberg in Berlin; Officine Zero on the ex Rsi premises – a former railway rolling-stock maintenance facility – Rome; MAAM, Museo dell’altro e dell’altrove, Rome; Forte Umbertino in the Parco Ecolandia, Reggio Calabria; the self-governing town of Craco; and the Grisù space in the former Fire Brigade barracks, Ferrara; to name but a few) or from policy actions (e.g. the Laboratori Urbani programme in Regione Puglia<sup>13</sup>; the Associazione Greenways for transformation of abandoned railway premises into parklands, or the Spazi Opportunità project, of Manifesto 2020 in Trieste, which started out as an online platform for management of abandoned areas).

These experiences are conducive to appropriation – on the collective plane – of the ‘anthropological’ place, bringing about the kind of recognition of a portion of the territory



referred to by Brandi. This form of conservation of the immaterial gesture becomes an architectonic, physical, form of appropriation of spaces and thus a form of conservation.

We therefore note a panorama in which a variety of ideas of conservation emerge, ranging from the attractiveness of the ‘hypermodern places’ of cultural tourism to appropriation of the ‘anthropological place’ of urban upgrading. Both bring about conservation, but the material outcomes differ entirely.

On the temporal plane, (tangible) matter and (intangible) memory can relate the one to the other in what we might call the ‘historic-present’.

In this excursus in the cultural tourism experience between visual/factual we might say that conservation concerns the matter/physical consistency of which ‘memory-images’ are made, but experience visual/factual becomes the determining factor for an acknowledgment of stratified values as an individual or as a part of a community, and this may be because ‘recording’ (the visual) is not ‘remembering’ (the factual).

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *The Rage (Wut)*, theatrical work by Elfriede Jelinek. Premiere at Münchner Kammerspiele, 16 April 2016, staging: Nicolas Stemann.

<sup>2</sup> Brandi 1963: 6. Translation by the author.

<sup>3</sup> “The respect due to all creatures requires that heritage properties must be considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong” (ICOMOS 1994).

<sup>4</sup> “To recognise landscapes in law as an essential component of people’s surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity” (Council of Europe 2000: Article 5).

<sup>5</sup> This news item is to be found in the UNESCO site; see <<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/memory-of-the-world/register/full-list-of-registered-heritage/registered-heritage-page-2/diaries-of-anne-frank/>> [Accessed 31 January 2017].

<sup>6</sup> Brandi 1963: 7. Translation by the author.

<sup>7</sup> “The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as travelling to experience the places, artefacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes visitation to cultural, historic, and natural resources. Research and planning for Heritage Tourism would include identifying local or regional points of interest, developing or organising those points of interest for visitation, and developing promotional and informational materials and guides for distribution to travellers and tourists through tourism bureaus, chambers of commerce, and by other marketing method”; see <<https://savingplaces.org/stories/preservation-glossary-to-days-word-heritage-tourism#.Wm9CSyOh3OQ>> [Accessed 31 January 2017].

<sup>8</sup> “Space and time, the ‘a priori forms of sensibility’ (Kant), are at one and the same time the object and the material of symbolic activity. From these, one takes the elements thanks to which, for example, the categories of high and low, near and far, limit and crossing are ordered, when dealing with space; and past and future, return and repetition, start and finish, when dealing with time. The notion of landscape strictly depends upon the conceptions of time and space that attempt to provide an account thereof” (Augé 2012: 7; translation by the author).

<sup>9</sup> “In the ruin we still see, however imperfectly, an admirable order of relations. Despite the fact that certain parts are missing and that the musical score, that musical harmony, is therefore incomplete, we perceive the pathetic condition of the building, and thus the building becomes practically an element of nature, practically geographic” (Venezia 2010: 16; translation by the author).

<sup>10</sup> “We went to see the Cathedral of Notre Dame. We had heard of it before. It surprises me sometimes to think how much we do know and how intelligent we are. We recognised the brown old Gothic pile in a moment; it was like the pictures” (Twain 2010: 82).

<sup>11</sup> “‘Management’ constitutes the immaterial structure of material conservation. As is the case for all immaterial structures, it presents as a programme and not as a project; it directs competences and actions, orients receptions, and governs, in a differentiated manner, complexities” (Fiorani 2014: 16; translation by the author).

<sup>12</sup> “Thus, in our sensitivity, a further reaction emerges: as men we take pride in the sensation that we created something that has practically returned to the state of nature” (Venezia 2010: 16; translation by the author).

<sup>13</sup> “As part of the Programma Bollenti Spiriti, Regione Puglia (the regional government authority of Puglia) is funding the birth of “Laboratori Urbani”. 151 real estate assets abandoned and which belong to Puglia’s municipalities – such as abandoned schools, empty industrial premises, and former religious houses, slaughterhouses, markets and barracks – were recovered as new public spaces for youngsters. Management of the Laboratori Urbani is assigned by public tender to enterprises and associations. Each Laboratorio Urbano presents its own contents and characteristics: spaces for the arts, including the performing arts; spaces for social functions and experimentation with new technologies; services for work, training and entrepreneurial activities for the young, exhibition spaces, and spaces for social activities and accommodation. Together, these workshops make up a regional network of spaces placed at the service of youngsters, and of youth-dedicated policies”. Translation by the author: see <[http://bollentispiriti.regione.puglia.it/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=4915&Itemid=1300356](http://bollentispiriti.regione.puglia.it/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=4915&Itemid=1300356)> [Accessed 31 January 2017].

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