

Markers of Visual Identity: Industrial Sites and Landscapes in Picture Postcards during the Socialist Period of Romania

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Abstract

The scientific study of postcards is characteristic of the second half of the 20th century to the present day. Research showed that postcards had been undervalued as a resource offering information about the world, despite the fact that, in what Geography is concerned for instance, postcards offer valuable information about both the Earth and people's lives. Our study focuses on picture postcards produced and circulated during the Romanian socialist period and, from their multitude, we narrowed down our research to the ones representing industrial sites and landscapes. Our hypothesis stated that there was a close relationship between the political ideology in Romania, the discourse on economic development and the representation of societal development through industry. Therefore, the aim was to identify the major representation features considering this topic of industrial development. We used mainly visual methodology to assess the information offered by picture postcards of this period and discourse analysis to identify the main ideas spread through scientific texts and we connected these two in order to contextualize the representations of industrial development in Romania. For our analysis, we used a sample of picture postcards with representations of most of the cities and towns of Socialist Romania. Our conclusions may enable decision-makers to choose the best solutions about valorizing industrial objectives as they were firmly marked in the citizens' conscience and in the way they perceived Romanian territorial identity and heritage.

Rezumat

Studiul științific bazat pe cărți poștale este caracteristic celei de-a doua jumătăți a secolului al XIX-lea și continuă până în prezent. Conform cercetărilor, cărțile poștale au fost surse de informații subevaluate despre lume, cu toate că, privind obiectul de studiu al Geografiei, cărțile poștale oferă informații valoroase atât despre Pământ, cât și despre viața oamenilor. Acest studiu se concentrează pe cărți poștale cu fotografii, realizate și circulate în timpul României socialiste, iar din multitudinea de subiecte cu referire la această perioadă, acest studiu se axează pe cărțile poștale care reprezintă peisaje și situri industriale. Ipoteza de la care am plecat este că a existat o relație strânsă între ideologia politică din România, discursul bazat pe dezvoltarea economică și mai ales reprezentarea dezvoltării sociale prin industrializare. Așadar, scopul a fost de a identifica

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caracteristicile majore ale reprezentării ideii de dezvoltare industrială în România. Metodologia vizuală a fost folosită pentru a evalua informațiile oferite de cărțile poștale din perioada studiată, combinată cu analiza de discurs, pentru a identifica principalele idei răspândite prin texte științifice, iar rezultatele au fost corelate pentru a contextualiza reprezentările dezvoltării industriale în România. Pentru analiza noastră, am folosit un eșantion de cărți poștale care a reprezentat majoritatea orașelor și municipiilor din România socialistă. Concluziile noastre pot ajuta factorii de decizie să aleagă cele mai bune soluții de valorificare a obiectivelor industriale, având în vedere că acestea au fost bine integrate în conștiința cetățenilor, în modul în care aceștia au perceput identitatea teritorială și patrimoniul României.

Keywords: representations, visual imagery, visual discourse, propaganda, industrialisation, urbanisation, development, territorial identity

1. Introduction

Deltiology is known as the study and collection of postcards. Collecting postcards developed during the Golden Age of postcards production situated at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. This study focuses on picture postcards produced and circulated during the Romanian socialist period and, from their multitude, we narrowed down our research to the ones representing industrial sites and landscapes. Our hypothesis stated that there was a close relationship between the political ideology in Romania, the discourse on economic development and the representation of societal development through industry. Therefore, the aim was to identify the major representation features considering this topic of industrial development.

Moreover, we wanted to prove that picture postcards were a tool, part of the political, ideological project of the Communist Party, of educating the Romanian citizens to become good patriots and communists (these two terms meant the same thing during this period). We are using visual evidence to analyse the representations of the social or lived space during socialist Romania, as picture postcards are not mimetic depictions of reality.

We considered the fact that historical events and processes, spatial transformation and the representations of all these marked the citizens' conscience and the way they perceived territorial identity and heritage. This idea is argued also in the most visible and recent research: "History is not just the past but is also with us. The past casts a shadow over the present, but the reverse is also true, as new social and political concerns provoke revisions of our understandings of the past. Space is seen as not merely a topological category but as a social and political construct, whose meaning is given by its content. State space defined by jurisdictional boundaries is merely one meaning, an important one given its connection to power, but challenged by other spatial imaginaries, above, below and across it. Both time and space are conceived of as relational rather than absolute. The combination of time and space allows us to provide context to events." [1:277].

Moreover, similarly to Kahn, who drew on the spatial theory of Lefebvre [2] to underline the significance of the *third space* (social space, lived space or *l'espace vécu*) for people's lives, we considered this type of space as the other reason to study visual representations on picture postcards, because they impacted the people's third space, these representations were part of their lived space: "Simultaneously physical and mental, concrete and abstract, it emerges from the dialectic of the two. Mental space, formulated in the head, is projected onto physical reality, which in turn feeds the imaginary. Edward Soja (1989:18) refers to third space as the habitus of social practices, a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings (Soja 1996:2)" [3:7].

Finally, in the last decade, also Romanian academics started to explore time and space using picture postcards. Up to the present, this was true for historians: "During the last decades, an increasing interest was manifested for postcards and their historical analysis, and a similar interest belongs to the publishing houses and collectors, to publish postcards albums, the ones that

document private collections, the history of certain regions, towns, and even of smaller settlements” [4:259].

Therefore, our present study may be considered a starting point in the Romanian geographical research using picture postcards. It must also be acknowledged that this paper is an exploratory one, as the authors of this article intend to realise more in-depth analyses on territorial processes and visual imagery.

2. Methodology

Interdisciplinary approaches and methodological pluralism are no longer innovative trends in the social sciences, but many times they are a must so that research can answer societal needs and problems, especially when time and space issues are explored: “Time and space do not lend themselves to a single approach in social science but show the need for methodological pluralism and combinations of approaches” [1:278].

Our research methodology includes discourse analysis and visual analysis. We employed these two methods to analyse scientific texts in Geography, picture postcards (the pictures on their fronts and the written texts on their backs), and a personal communication from a collector of picture postcards during the socialist period.

Our visual research material was obtained through accessing websites where picture postcards were sold and from our personal collections. We selected the postcards according to the image they hosted on their front. Therefore, this selection process was clearly subjective, as our glance upon those postcards was. A sample of more than 200 picture postcards for Romania was analysed. The selected postcards are representative for the display of national development symbols promoted in the visual landscape characteristic to the picture postcards of the period.

3. Results and discussions

3.1 Development by means of industrialization and urbanization

Geography scientific texts of the socialist period show that industrialisation, urbanisation and settlement systematisation in the urban area were priorities and the means to build the new promised society: “Gradual elimination of the strong territorial differences in the development of production forces, realising a rational repartition of industry on the entire territory, the harmonious and many-sided development of all activity branches and of all counties were written down among the future objectives aiming to create the new society, after the victorious antifascist and anti-imperialist revolution for social and national liberation” [5:211].

This societal transformation was reported through industrial development (modernisation and higher productivity): “The dynamism of the Romanian socialist economy is manifested in case of the most important indicators. Thus, for instance, Romania appeared constantly among the states of the world with the fastest increase rate for industry (11.2% between 1971 and 1980 for the global production) [...]” [5:212]. Industrial achievements were considered the key of success for an efficient economy and for the diminishing of territorial disparities: “The modernisation of the national economy refers, among others, to changing its structure, in the sense of increasing the participation of industry at creating the national revenue and the social product [...], at a rational and balanced placement of production forces on the entire territory of our country, at accelerating the urbanisation and settlement systematisation processes, at the development of the service sector” [5:212-213] or “[...] the development of industry as a leading sector in each county determines the progress of the other activity branches, industrial increase being the fundamental generator of the socio-economic complexity and progress” [5:213] or “[...] industry continues to be a decisive factor in creating an efficient economy [...]” [6:213]. In this context, systematic development of heavy

industry was a must that ensured the Romanian Communist Party's vision of building a better Romania [7:173].

Another reported change was referring to the number of people working in the increasing number of factories and of larger factories. This process is considered to have contributed to a better control of the population's life: "[...] increasing the number of industrial companies having over 5,000 employees starting with 1970. The increase of productivity represented for sure the main reason for this evolution. But not the only one. Ordering the workers, transforming their minds and bodies according to the revolutionary coordinates, whose unique and privileged possessor the Romanian Communist Party pretended to be, was as well one of the main reasons for this gigantic undertaking" [7:175].

The Geography scientific discourse was imbued with quotations from the political one, referring to the development of Romania and its successful planned economy: "The socialist property over the production means permitted to the popular democratic state to establish the bases for *the planned development of the national economy*, where socialist industrialisation was an essential component. The first five-year plan, 1951-1955, materialised for the first time within a unitary conception the fundamental objectives of the Party policy for economic and social development of the country and for improving the popular masses' living conditions. During the 1961-1965 five-year plan, the *unitary socialist economy* was realised, so that the 1966-1970 five-year plan had the role to *consolidate the socialist construction*, the technical and material basis of the new society; thus were prepared the conditions to realise the *programme for creating the many-sided developed socialist society and the advancement of Romania towards communism*. The remarkable results achieved during the 1976-1980 five-year plan, the first stage in creating the many-sided developed socialist society, in fact the whole decade of 1971-1980, when the industrial production of our country was almost tripled, raised Romania on a new civilisation step (Nicolae Ceaușescu, 1980 a)" [5:211].

or

"The ascending line followed by the evolution of our country from the beginning of the development period based on five-year plans for the national economy enabled Romania to transform itself 'during a short historical period, from a country with a pronounced agrarian character, with a weak industry and an underdeveloped agriculture, into an industrial-agrarian state, with a modern industry, in continuous development, and with a socialist agriculture undergoing modernisation, with an increasing level of material and spiritual civilisation' (Nicolae Ceaușescu, 1979 b, p. 11-12)" [5:211].

Because industrialisation meant also urbanisation [7:171], statistics in Geography scientific texts showed the rhythm of this change reflected by the percent of the urban population from that of Romania. Thus, the urban population of communist Romania increased very much and constantly between 1948 and 1989, from 3.713.139 (23.4% of the total population) to 12.311.803 (that was 53.2% of the total) [7:172-173].

During the socialist period, the remodelling of the urban space was reflected by the picture postcards. *Urban systematisation* was a priority and it first focused on large cities and, after 1980, on the small and medium-sized ones [8:503-504]. This remodelling was triggered by two main processes: massive industrialisation and territorial systematisation of settlements (especially of the urban ones). These processes were reflected by the scientific discourse in university Economic Geography: "Both urban systematisation and territorial organisation had to answer to the big requests of industrialisation during this stage, realising, without doubt, very important actions: new towns have been built almost from scratch (Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Victoria, Orșova, Motru, etc.); modern districts have been built in the big industrial centres (Bucharest, Brașov, Craiova, Galați); the civic centres of all the towns that are county residences have been renovated from an urbanistic point of view [...]; the Black Sea seaside has been systematised almost to its final parameters, etc." [9:502-503] (Figure 1).

Examples for the systematisation process of the cities are a common representation on the picture postcards after the 1960: the images with rows of blocks of flats in any part of the urban

area (e.g. residential districts or city centres).



Figure 1. The Romanian Seaside at Jupiter, representation from 1981 propaganda postal cards series

3.2 Development and the socialist nation

The role of representing the cityscape for national identity construction and the connection between imagery and nationalism are also dealt with here. We analysed images in order to investigate the role of picture postcards for nationalism and nation building – legitimising and reinforcing the Communist Party’s power and control over the Romanian people.

The literature on nation and nationalism is abundant both abroad and in Romania and, in this paper, we drew mainly on the ideas about the Romanian socialist nation, discussed by Emanuel Copilaș (2015) [7] in his book, one of the most exhaustive and recent contributions on the topic. Copilaș realises an in-depth analysis of diverse processes in the Romanian society and of the political discourse during the socialist period of Romania (1948-1989), a discourse that functions ideologically and builds an officially accepted view upon the world [7:83]: “The ‘new type’ of patriotism was based on a prospective legitimacy, always projected towards the future [...]. Patriotism, the nation needed to mean now the Party, industrialisation, future, production, ‘building socialism’, while before 1948 they meant the past, family, traditions, Orthodoxy, political pluralism (even though it was limited), consumption and free association” [7:87] or “The Position of the Romanian Communist Party was clear in this sense: the past needed to be recovered in a progressive manner in order to be dialectically intertwined with the present and be projected into a revolutionary future, at least equally glorious” [7:161].

This type of discourse promoted “the new man” necessary to “constructing the multi-sided developed socialism” [7:163-164] and thus constructed the image of Communism as a way of living [7:164].

Superposing the Communist Party over the nation [7:165] had political, ideological, economic and social goals: “[...] mobilising the society so that it is being infused with the pride to participate directly, through the development of heavy industry, of light industry and of infrastructure, to the general progress of the country, hoping that mobilising them with practical aims, material ones, will bring in time the transformation of people’s individual, little bourgeois consciousness according to the regime’s ideological convictions (see Florea, Moraru, 1973, 49-50)” [7:167] or “[...] excessive industrialisation had the objective to catch up with Occident that had a better place in global competition due to certain states that, in their vast majority, had been underdeveloped by the end of World War II, internal consolidation and thus obtaining a minimum of legitimacy, respectively engaging the population in a permanent incremental dynamics and obtaining its consensus related to

regime's material objectives, stimulating voluntarism and the patriotic pride to build, to produce, to deduce an individual and collective significance from permanent engagement ending with 'great realisations for all working people'" [7:169].

Moreover, this superposing of the Communist Party over the nation was possible due to the "propagandist exacerbation" [7:191] and this was meant to lead to patriotism, which, according to the "national-communist canon" [7:167], should make people responsible for the economic dimension of the country's development: work "[...] represented in fact the measure for authentic patriotism" (Popovici, 1980:151-160, quoted by Copilaș [7:181]).

3.2.1 Theoretical background on doing research with picture postcards

Almost any scientific paper using picture postcards for research offers a definition of these: "Picture postcards are postal cards with a photograph or photographs on one side, and printing and room for a mailing address on the other side" [10:73] or "The picture postcard is many things – a kitsch souvenir, a prized reminder of an absent loved one, a bygone curio – but above all it is a text, a multi-agency object which offers insights into 'the flows and elisions between the textual and the spatial'" (Saunders, 2010:437, quoted by Price [11:159]).

Among the various definitions of postcards, we chose the following as the most exhaustive, because it underlines the status and impact of the postcard in society: "Despite its relatively humble status as a mass-produced, cheap and disposable artefact, the postcard has been an important and influential genre shaping the collective social and cultural imagery of the world since the beginning of the twentieth century" [12:1].

There are plenty enough studies in the international literature on images and even on postcard imagery so that one can realise a theoretically and methodologically informed research on picture postcards from the Romanian socialist period. It is a fact that studies written by Romanian academics or by those familiar with the Romanian context are a few and, to our knowledge, the subject of postcards and propaganda during 1948-1989 has not been explored so far for Romania. Nevertheless, some recent studies on Romanian civic centres underlined the relationship between the visual landscape, propaganda and architecture and territorial planning during that period [13].

The themes researched in the international scientific literature in relation to postcards are the following: tourism [14], social history [15, 16], war and propaganda [17], history of the scientific use of postcards [18], the postcard as discourse and in its social context [19, 20], environmental studies [10], colonialism [3, 21], literary geographies [11], etc. In Romania, only a few authors realised researched using picture postcards [22, 23, 4, 24], or published postcards collections [25, 26, 27]).

According to previous research, in the more developed West, communicating short messages using illustrated cards has become an alternative to letters starting with the second half of the 19th century, as the "postcard was officially introduced in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1869 to facilitate communication among the poorer classes" [28:198]. The use of postcards has reached a peak starting with the 20th century, as the Golden Age of the picture postcard was between 1900 and 1914 [18:170]. However, this use was not evenly distributed on the political map, because in Eastern Europe, and in young countries like Romania, popularization of postcards was slowed down for primarily economic reasons and also because of the lack of a proper postal service.

Moreover, within Romania, there were regional variations regarding the popularization of postcards. For instance, Transylvania benefitted from Western influences and, as a former province of the Habsburg Empire, had quickly taken the culture of using such messages with illustrations. In the interwar period, overlapped with the short duration of the Romanian Monarchy, postcards had begun to be popularized as well, but they were still more expensive than traditional letters due to the printing process.

In the Communist period of Romania, even if the national telephony system acquired a certain history due to modernization, public phones dominated, and private ones were considered luxury until the late 1980s, thus "encouraging" the development of the culture for writing messages, which

were cheaper and more private. In rural areas, most of the time, there was just one public telephone at the local postal office or at the mayor's office. Public phones within urban areas served only locally and not between cities, while there was always a psychological pressure: the fear of being listened to by the Security (secret) services [29]. This context favoured the use of written messages and also of postcards, which became a tool for spreading communist propaganda.

3.2.2 Methodological approach to researching with picture postcards

In a study on tourist picture postcards, Winiwarter [28:195] underlines that “postcards are a visual instruction manual for the consumption of sights” and that “the choice of cards is addressee-specific and by no means coincidental”. This is true also for people's fundamentally visual experience of everyday life.

At the same time, this researcher warns against the possibility of achieving objectivity and an exhaustive analysis: “there is no way of determining the full range of postcards in existence at a given place or time, nor can the output of a particular publisher be determined quantitatively. Postcard catalogues, both printed and online, are biased, as they only list collectibles, rare specimens, or show images of special interest to collectors” [28:197].

Similarly, Thissen, who published a research paper on representations of the industrial city of Rotterdam (1880-1970), in which she “combines aesthetic analysis with social history” [30:307], underlines that photography was seen as part of the industrial age and thus it was perceived as guaranteeing objectivity, “because photographic images are mechanically produced and reproduced” [30:307]. In fact, at the end of the 19th c., advances in photography and international communication raised global awareness (Edwards 2012, quoted in Chernela and Pereira [31]) and gave the illusion of the image objectivity.

However, what matters when interpreting images and their cultural meaning, is not only how images look, but how they are looked at [32:12]. Berger (1972:9), quoted by Rose [32:13], underlines that “we never look just at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves”. There is always a connection between image and the viewer. As a result, image interpretation is a highly interactive process and the answers to a series of questions help contextualise its meaning: Who produced it? Why? What is the aim of that representation? Who is the audience? Where was the image circulated? What are those images representative of? In our present study, answering these questions helped us sample picture postcards from that period.

Rose discusses the difficult process of sampling picture postcards and ensuring the representativeness of images [32:89-90] and other authors describe in detail the process of analysing picture postcards: “We are employing a similar approach of gathering as much information from and around postcards as possible. In practice this entails two stages. We first look at postcards as material objects that feature the following information: stamp and postmark, address, image, caption, text and publisher. Each of these features uncovers a certain aspect of production, movement, imaginaries and communication of postcards. These elements are further connected to various social practices and systems. This second stage of analysis offers a rich contextual description within which postcards gain their meaning. In this paper the second level of analysis will be indicative rather than deep” ([14:4] in the pre-published version).

In this methodological context, postcards from the communist period should be analysed also as a way of propaganda, revealing many general aspects of the state as a whole. In the interpretation of these postcards, should always be considered the following aspects: (1) What is the message behind the postcard images? (2) How did the post office responded to the Party's demands? (3) What materials and techniques did they prefer in making those postcards? (4) What relevance or psychological impact had the chosen or approved images for the postcards on the population? (5) What relevance have these postcards today?

3.2.3 Main features of representations in picture postcards from the socialist period of Romania

Due to the systematisation process, a new urban pattern was created and this situation asked for a restructuring of the old visual representations of the Romanian cities. The tourists (both foreign and from within Romania) were instructed about this new information also with the visual tool of picture postcards.

Picture postcards from this period did not seem to promote the consumption of places by tourists and not so much recreation. These activities were not much represented. People were pictured going to work (in front of factories and institutions) or going about their daily routine. Work was a matter of both education, ideology and propaganda during the socialist period.

Picture postcards of that period (1948-1989) were not embellished through drawings or technical processes, but they seemed to present “the truth”, the authentic image of a certain place. These picture postcards host typical depictions of spaces and thus the picture postcards collages – cityscape mosaics – create the officially accepted narrative of a place’s identity.

Therefore, these picture postcards are relevant for the present perception on place identity and for how people relate to places and, because they contributed to people’s education, picture postcards are part of their visual memory: “My interest for postcards manifested for the first time when I was in the 5th grade, when I saw an album with picture postcards from Romania, realised by the best pupil in the 4th grade, who was taught by my mother. Shortly, I collected postcards for two full albums. In these albums, I had picture postcards from Romania because rarely postcards from abroad arrived in our country, and in our village even more rarely. I used to receive postcards from my relatives and friends across the country. From postcards I loved the most the images with mountain landscapes and well-known monumental buildings. I liked to recognise the beautiful places, the unique ones and I liked to associate those with names of waterfalls, of mountain peaks, palaces, churches, statuary groups, hotels, etc. I learnt what to classify means when I grouped the postcards according to certain criteria. I think that the fact that I liked the beautiful landscapes from the picture postcards made me wish to see those in reality and I can say that I saw many places from Romania that I had known before from my picture postcards” (picture postcards collector during the socialist period; personal communication in September 2018).

Most of these picture postcards depicted urban settings. Some of the picture postcards hosted the national colours, the county coat of arms, and emblems. The coat of arms of the county, when used, was superposed on some of the coloured pictures in a collage with images from the city, or was one of the pictures of the respective collage. These collages included industrial sites, factories, blocks of flats, important old and new buildings of the town or city, historical buildings, modern roads, restaurants, hotels (addressing the tourists’ gaze), natural landscape, chalets, etc.

Many times, the industrial sites within an image collage of a city were placed in the middle of the respective representation or in the upper part of the postcard. For instance, for Bacău County: a collage with Cașin Abbey, Bacău: Consiliul popular județean [County Popular Council], Heroes’ Monument, Villas; for Baia Mare: The statue of the Romanian Soldier, “Carpați” Hotel, The Political and Administrative Palace, The “Miner” Statue in “Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej” Square – not circulated, but with a postal stamp from 1981; for Buzău: County Political and Administrative Headquarters, The Postal Office Building, The Trade Unions Culture House [Casa de Cultură a Sindicatelor], and “Dacia” Store.

Cinemas, theatres, parks, universities, research centres (rare and with industrial focus) were represented. Often represented were commercial stores (“Magazin universal”, “Cooperativa de consum”) and postal offices. Also financial institutions like CEC (with the message “Save your Money at CEC”). Churches and abbeys were represented in picture postcards as tourist sites – “[...] Vadim Tudor insists at his turn on Orthodoxy as a catalyst of the future national identity” [7:198].

Usually, territorial identity markers were represented, containing newly-introduced elements such as: new names for streets, for squares and factories, etc. (and these reflected the ideological discourse of the Communist Party, because they promoted their leaders’ names: I.V. Lenin, Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej). For example, for Deva, on the same collage of a picture postcard published in

1976, there is the Statue of Decebal (King of Dacia, between 85 and 106 A.D., one of the first rulers of the people on the present territory of Romania, about 2000 years ago) and the Statue of Dr. Petru Groza (prime-minister in the first Communist governments). Other names referring to the Roman and Dacian rule are “Trajan” Hotel in Baia Mare, “Dacia” Square and “Dacia” Store in Buzău. References to the Soviet Power and to the so-called significant political role of the Romanian Communist Party in 1944 are made through names like: “23rd of August” Boulevard in Craiova (postcard from 1982).

The typical cityscape was dominated by the blocks of flats districts according to the representations in picture postcards. These blocks of flats were also placed in the city centre, along new boulevards (e.g. in Târgoviște, Baia Mare – with George Coșbuc Street –, Onești (Figure 2), Tulcea, etc.). For Zlatna, in the 1970s and 1980s, new residential districts (blocks of flats) were represented. A picture postcard of Piatra Neamț includes a representation of an important ruler (the statue of Stephan the Great), and many representations of blocks of flats. The latter is true also for Pitești city.



Figure 2. Oituz Boulevard in Onești (Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej) – Urban Landscape Characteristic of Many Systemised Towns and Cities of Romania

3.2.4 Industrial landscapes and sites in picture postcards – before and during the socialist period of Romania

In postcards from the beginning of the 20th century (before World War I and in the interwar period), industrial sites were represented (e.g. for Ploiești, Reșița, Anina, Azuga - Cement Factory, Azuga – “View to the Cloth Factory”), while the publishing houses were local ones (e.g. for Anina, C. Mazilu Publishing House, Azuga; for Anina – with a postcard representing the railway station and the factory – Librăria Felix Weiss Publishing House, Oravița; Frederic Hollschütz; Zlatna, Ioan Ursica Publishing House, Zlatna, or for Steierdorf – Anina, published by Horváth L. felvétele: Anina – Automatikfabrik und Elektrische Centrale; in 1942, The Publishing House of Manea & Stănescu Bookstore, Brăila).

The industrial sites were integrated in the form of collage in the visual representation of most

cities during the socialist period, resulting “multi-picture postcards”, offering “multi-picture overviews” of the cityscape [30:319]. The industrial objectives are put forward in picture postcards transmitting or reinforcing the idea that industry is “a fundamental element in the story of the city’s identity and its economic success” [30:318]: the “werkstad as a social space” [30:314]. Thus, industry was part of the visual narrative and identity story of the cities: industrial landscapes were transformed in the new icons of the urban area.

However, a dehumanized industrial landscape and a rather desolate one was rendered in picture postcards where heavy industry was represented. In addition, for some cities, images of industrial success excluded the ones that were not directly connected to the sector (e.g. for Săvinești town), but, at the same time, they implied that that type of success was the ultimate aim of the entire socialist society ruled by the Communist Party.

Industrial landscape was characteristic of the postcards dedicated to the following urban centres: Turda, Mediaș, Onești, Reșița, Ploiești (often with Brazi Refinery, and in collages), Bacău, Bârlad (the Ball-Bearing Factory), etc. On one of the postcards, the caption “industrial landscape” appeared and the name of the town (“Turda – peisaj industrial”), in black and white (Popular Republic of Romania, Meridiane Publishing House). Collages with pictures of industrial landscapes and sites: Reșița, Ploiești, Bacău, Hunedoara, etc.

According to our sample, Editura Meridiane was the most active one in publishing picture postcards during the socialist period. It sometimes mentioned on the back of the postcards “Arta Grafică” and the name of the photographer (e.g. for a postcard with an industrial site of Ploiești – not mentioned, from the socialist period, the name of the photographer appears: F. Dobrescu).

A postcard from the Popular Republic of Romania represented “Buhuși” Cloth Factory (appeared also on a postcard circulated in 1923). In a picture postcard of Bucharest, as early as 1948, the caption on the front page reads like this “Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej Clothing Factory” (Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej was the leader of the Romanian Communist Party from 1948 to his death, in 1965).

The dams were often represented in the socialist period postcards (e.g. in a collage of Bacău County, on a postcard circulated in 1987, on its back, the following were printed by the publishing house (text in Romanian and French): “Valea Ursului” Dam; Dărmănești – The Refinery; The Students’ Camp. For Bicaz (1969): The accumulation lake for the hydroelectric power plant; the hydroelectric power plant; the dam.

There are also diverse collages for Bicaz – representing different parts of the anthropic modernising interventions: the dam, the lake, the hydroelectric power plant), modern road along the dam, people stopped near a car – and part of the landscape – and admiring the landscape, etc. On the back of such a postcard circulated in 1965, it was written Popular Republic of Romania, Bicaz – “V.I. Lenin” Hydroelectric Power Plant from Stejaru. For Baia Mare: The Dam and Firiza accumulation lake (Photo by C. Vladu, “Arta Grafică”, Meridiane Publishing House, circulated in 1970). Another postcard represented Baia Mare through the landscape of the city, with blocks of flats and pollution clouds in the background (Popular Republic of Romania). There are several such different postcards of Baia Mare. Very often appeared representations of the dam and of the Iron Gates Hydropower and Navigation System.

To the question of representation, we also noticed that the Romanian urban centres were not necessarily represented as tourist sites or very few of them (e.g. most often for the Romanian seaside). The collages usually had pictures with patches of flowers (in at least one of the images of the collage), to make the postcard more colourful and attractive (e.g. when representing industry, blocks of flats). In fact, the rhythm of construction in cities was an indicator of industrial production and welfare in the socialist nation and these elements were represented also in the visual discourse.

3.2.5 Changing representations of the urban areas that underwent industrialisation

Representations of many settlements on picture postcards had changed. Here are just a few examples. In 1931, a postcard with the caption “Greetings from Călan” presented an image with the School Principal’s House and three children photographed on a field in front of the house. They

were posing for the camera. This postcard had the captions printed in Romanian and German. Another one, with the caption “Greeting from Călan” (not circulated) (the caption is in Romanian, German and Hungarian), being an old one (year not mentioned), was printed at a local publishing house: Verlag von Adolf Wollmann, Călan. It had also a second caption with the text “The Iron Factory” – this was represented surrounded by hay stacks. For the 1970, a postcard of Călan presents, in the foreground, blocks of flats and a bus in the street, in the middle of the field, and traces (smoke) of the polluting industry in the background. Călan – The New Town – represented on another picture postcard from late 1970s, with grim blocks of flats and a big patch of red and white roses in the foreground (this signalling that this is a town). There was certainly a change in this town’s representation.



Figure 3. Hunedoara – Priority of the heavy industry in economic and urban development

Cămpina is represented in an old postcard: oil wells and an eruption of these, from 1918-1920. Some of these picture postcards were published in Berlin, Dresda, and Leipzig (numbered postcards), or by private publishing houses from Bucharest and Cămpina. Another one, from 1922, has a caption on the front page: “Cămpina Town: the Refinery and the Prahova Valley Electric Factory”. Also people were represented in these old postcards – sitting for the picture to be taken. From 1968, we identified a postcard of Cămpina, with the following caption on the picture “The Pioneers’ Park” (during the Popular Republic of Romania). Another picture postcard of Cămpina, from this period, is a collage with The Pioneers’ House, a block of flats with passers-by and two historical buildings and the statue of a Romanian writer. Then, another one with a hotel and restaurant in Cămpina, as proofs of development.

Cugir is represented in an old postcard, with people posing for the photograph with the “Water Basin of the Iron Factory” (caption in Hungarian). Many old picture postcards of Cugir were published in Budapest. From 1969, during the socialist period, a picture postcard of Cugir highlighted a view of the town with a blocks of flats district.

A picture postcard of Hunedoara, from 1928, published in this city, represents it, but with no industry present, although there were also postcards before World War I representing this city through the Iron Factories. During the socialist period, industrial sites and landscapes were very much represented in the picture postcards of Hunedoara (Figure 3).

An old picture postcard of Petroșani (undated) represents the railway station and the western mine (this was the caption on the front, written in Romanian, Hungarian, and German). Another one, from 1978, was a collage of pictures with the new identity markers of Petroșani: new blocks of flats, the coat of arms, and the mine buildings.

To sum up, also before the socialist period, it was a habit to follow in picture postcards the development of the territory and to represent the most known or significant sites (i.e. iconic images, landmarks). What was changed after the socialism appeared was the appropriation of some of these development achievements and adding new ones so that the proof existed in support of the economic, social and cultural progress in the period. Moreover, mostly men, photographed in groups, were represented in old picture postcards with industrial landscapes, not necessarily in working outfit, but many wearing suits. In the newer postcards from the socialist period, people are represented in the street, as passers-by, faceless, on the beach, in open-air restaurants (not being aware that they are photographed), part of the crowd, with no identity or working in the factory.

3.2.6 The case study: propaganda picture postcards series of 1981 – “a pictorial inventory of nationalist tropes” [28:211]

Kahn argues “that representations of place are enmeshed in politics, and that human lives are ensnared in the politics of representation” [3:22]. According to this, it is to be argued the existence of a visual ideology of the Communist Party for the cityscapes and the production of city identities, of their urbanity (e.g. public space identity production through picture postcards, self-representations of the governmental power). Therefore, the production of a visual discourse.

Propaganda during the socialist period of Romania was very visual in contents: it used visual methods and tools to make the Communist Party’s presence visible. Information was shared through visual tools (e.g. TV, newspapers and magazine photographs, information boards at work places, in schools, etc.). Postcards were such a convenient tool of spreading information, of educating people and producing their visual memory. They informed on what tourists could visit, benefit from, and what Romanians (and the Communist Party) should be proud of. They were just another tool in the government’s visual policy. As such, it was very important for the ideological discourse to be supported by representations of the country in full development. They were the true image of development and achievements realised by the “working people”. Thus, the cityscape was imagined, constructed by insiders for insiders mainly. These picture postcards were not a work of fiction, but they certainly obeyed a script: they were a visual tool confirming how industrious the working people were during socialism and the success of the new economic system.

The nationalist story is reflected in these picture postcards, with their particular images considered as representative of the nation’s achievements before and especially during this rule. Therefore, people seeing these images could be educated on a daily basis: “Postcards are one of the barely noticed signs used for the daily inculcation of nationhood, part and parcel of the visual semantics of nationalism. Michael Billig calls this banal nationalism: ‘the term banal nationalism is introduced to cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced. It is argued that these habits are not removed from everyday life, as some observers have supposed. Daily, the nation is indicated, or ‘flagged’, in the lives of its citizenry. Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition” (Cusack, “Irish Nationalism” cit., p. 211, quoting M. Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, Sage, London 1995, p. 6, and quoted by Winiwarter [28:206-207]).

According to Winiwarter, these images from postcards are part of the nationalist propaganda: “they are visual statements laden with symbolism, and part of this symbolism is national in character” [28:212]. The same author highlights the very strong connection between tourism and

propaganda: “Sites that are symbolically laden materializations of the nation are very commonly also tourist sights. Thus, tourism can serve to reinforce nationalism. The otherness of the tourist is used to make claims about one’s own identity” [28:211].

Together, picture postcards create a “meta-image”, which is made of “the combination of all important national sights” [28:212]. This meta-image is part of the people’s mental framework that they will use or operate with when relating to their country, to their nation, to their community. Therefore, we also distinguished in the representations of the socialist Romania in picture postcards, the “nationalist gaze” [28:213] that Winiwarter identified in her study on “Nationalized Nature on Picture Postcards: Subtexts of Tourism from an Environmental Perspective” (2008).

Most of the picture postcards we had access to were not circulated and the circulated ones uploaded on websites did not have their back part scanned, so we do not know what they contained, with only one exception (text written in Hungarian, about a lot of family issues, health, weather, travelling relatives, buying coffee, selling the house, etc.). There is no reference to the picture on the respective postcard, and this is the case for most of them, while the language is spontaneous and loose, “more characteristic of the spoken word than of writing” (Carter, 2004, p. 58, quoted in Pollen [15:13]).

The above mentioned features are characteristic also to the picture postcards we selected for a small case study of images and propaganda. The majority of the analysed postal cards are from the same series, printed at the request of the government, on the occasion of “60 years since the creation of the Romanian Communist Party 1921-1981”. Through these representations, the Party legitimised its power and the achieved societal progress. This is very well reflected in these series of picture postcards celebrating the Romanian Communist Party. We had access to nine picture postal cards in that series. All of them were in two colours (blue and white or brown and white, with a pattern for writing the sender’s and the addressee’s addresses). This reverential series was published in 1981. It had a printed stamp, with the emblem of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR – acronym in Romanian). What is interesting is that also the sender’s full address had to be written within a printed frame, not only the one of the addressee. This is true for all the picture postcards in this series.

In this 1981 series, were the following: Bucharest: “Otopeni” International Airport; Focșani: The Clothing Factory; Bacău: The Wood Processing Factory; Râmnicu Vâlcea: The Petrochemical Factories; Buhuși: The Cloth Factory; Hunedoara: Industrial Landscape; Jupiter: View; “The Iron Gates I” Hydropower Plant; Bucharest: “Drumul Taberei” District – “Favorit Complex”. One of the copies of the picture postcard for Hunedoara has a postal stamp and then a wet stamp applied on it, both with the text “60 years since the creation of the Romanian Communist Party” (written in Romanian). The wet stamp has the word Bucharest included. Two of them were sent within Bucharest. One of them has a postal stamp from 1981, in Râmnicu Vâlcea, but was not circulated. Also the date 8th of May 1981 appeared on this, when the Romanian Communist Party was created.

Promoting these images in the 1980s (Figure 4) (an austerity period when even the food was rationalised) indicates that the Party was looking for ways to increase its popularity by showing people: “these is what we have done and we will do it again even if now we are going through harsh times”.

Very low-quality and small-sized images are illustrating almost exclusively industrial landscapes and engineering monuments as great achievements of the Party. There are also tourist stamps on a part of the analysed postal cards which invite the receivers of the message to visit the county where the monument is located, indicating that these industrial landscapes and engineering monuments were also promoted for tourism. For instance, one of these postcards has a stamped invitation where the word Argeș appears in the beginning and then continues with “it invites you to visit the tourist objectives in the county”, all printed in capital letters. This invitation is for the “Dam over the Argeș”. It was both a popularization of the Party and a tourist promotion of the county and, by repeatedly promoting these images (also in school books and magazines), the industrial units become deeply representative for several cities, gaining also local identity features, common people succeeding in naming the place only by the image.



Figure 4. Hunedoara: industrial landscape (1981) and Focșani: The Clothing Factory (1981)

All the nine cards in this 1981 series are in fact postal cards, not postcards. During the Communist period, postal cards, which clearly differentiate from postcards because of their incorporated or pre-printed stamps, became more popular thanks to government support and the subordinate post offices. Thus, the illustrated card with an embedded stamp was sold very cheaply (sometimes only for 30 bani or 0.3 ROL as can be seen on the analysed cards “Prețul de vânzare 30 bani” meaning “The sale price is 30 bani”). Because of the incorporated stamps, the purchased postal cards could be quickly filled in and left at any mailbox making them sometimes more practical than searching an interurban phone, even if the message was transmitted much slower. However, the real benefit of all postcards was that they were transparent, the message could be easily controlled, they also transmitted a clear message from the Party (in this case, the analysed postal cards were spreading images of industrial landscapes and major socialist projects in order to popularize the only Party and its achievements on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of its existence in Romania).

The very poor quality of the paper used for these postal cards and the relatively simple design, stamps without safety features and printed mainly with simple techniques, usually with an out-of-date rotary printing press (the writing and other elements on the cards are sometimes distorted or crooked, and the only colour in which the postal cards are made is often the cheapest and the most abundant) shows the state of the Romanian economy and the Party’s policy through which better quality products were dedicated for export. These materials contributed to lowering the price of the postal cards, making them the cheapest way of transmitting a message and the most popular until the end of the regime. Quality was not encouraged and it was considered a luxury. There are numerous defects that reduce the visibility of the text, the pictures are of the poorest quality and the dimensions are also very small for economic reasons. The first postcards appeared in the West, a century ago, can be a serious rival for many of the Communist era postal cards and postcards, showing the economic austerity of their production. These cards had more of a powerful utilitarian feature than an aesthetic one.

Sending a postal card with the industrial landscape or production unit could signify sometimes the fact that the sender is working on that unit, being proud that he or she is part of the production of a very familiar product across the country. It was not unusual that certain products were bearing

the name of the provenience town or city. For example, the carpets and the curtains produced in Pașcani town were called Pașcani Carpets and Curtains, making famous both the town and the product, generally known throughout the country. The psychological side could be given by *the illusory truth effect* [33] (also known as the validity effect, truth effect or the reiteration effect), which is the tendency to believe information to be correct after repeated exposure. People accepted and believed that the country is modernised, developed and prosperous, even if the national planned economy could not afford quality postal cards and postcards.

On the analysed postal cards, large projects of the communist period are illustrated. For example, The Iron Gate I Hydropower Plant, which was at the time of completion in 1972, one of the largest hydroelectric power stations in the world and remained the largest dam on the Danube River and one of the largest hydro power plants in Europe [34:89, 35]. Another hydroelectric monumental project was Vidraru Dam on the Argeș River, with its picturesque landscapes. At the inauguration, in 1966, the dam was on the sixth place in Europe and the seventh in the world by type and dimensions; in 2013, it remained on the 15th place in Europe and 27th in the world considering its height of 166.60 metres [36:12]. These megaprojects (Figure 5) were an element of national pride that the Party promoted boldly on every occasion and so these engineering monuments have remained tourist attractions and a legacy of the golden period of hydropower in Romania (1960-1980).



Figure 5. The Dam on the Argeș (1981) and “The Iron Gates I” Hydropower Plant (1981)

Other similar picture postcards as format, but not in the 1981 series, were the following: “Hunedoara” Iron and Steel Factories (published in 250,000 copies in 1963); “Brazi” Steam Power Plant (published in 1963, in 250,000 copies); “Onești Refinery” – postcard circulated in 1965 (published in 1964, in 200,000 copies); “Hunedoara” Iron and Steel Factories (published in 1963, in 250,000 copies); “Săvinești” Sythetical Fibres Chemical Factories (published in 1963, in 250,000 copies); Săvinești: Synthetical Threads and Fibres Factory (pub. in 1974); Slatina: Aluminium Factory (pub. in 1974); Slatina: “Oltul” Universal Store (pub. in 1975); Slatina: “Al. I. Cuza” Boulevard (representing rows of blocks of flats, published in 1985 or 1986); Târgu Jiu: “Gorj” Hotel (pub. in 1985); Caracal: View (pub. in 1986); Bârlad: The Railway Station (published in 1986); Bistrița: The Headquarters of the Romanian Communist Party County Committee and of the County Popular Council (pub. in 1989). All the postcards in this series had a blank back for writing

the sender's message. About the texts on the back of picture postcards during the socialist period we wrote in the next section.

Large chemical factories such as those from Râmnicu Vâlcea or Săvinești (Figure 6), with more than 20,000 employees [37] have remained in the local memory and also as local identity icons, considering that these factories and their products were known nation widely. Ore smelters like that from Hunedoara (for decades it was the home of the most important iron and steel industry from Romania) [38, 39] were considered great achievements of the Communist Party.



Figure 6. Râmnicu Vâlcea: The Petrochemical Factories (1981) and Săvinești: The Synthetical Threads and Fibres Factory (1974)

To sum up this part, we underline that just a few picture postal cards were selected to celebrate the 60 years of existence of the Romanian Communist Party. We asked questions like the following: Why those? What do they have in common? As it would be naïve to believe that their selection was random. Their quality was very poor due to very cheap cardboard and the image quality was likewise. They show how socialist cities were regularly portrayed. Thus, these picture postcards are institutionalized representations of Romania. Then, this series of picture postcards bring again to the fore the iconic images that had already made a statement in many other postcards during that period. These visual tropes of the Romanian past and of the cityscape help us understand present approaches to history, society, culture, and development.

3.2.7 Senders' text on the back of the picture postcards

Rarely, senders' text on the back of picture postcards had comments on the image on its front. For instance, on the back of one postcard circulated in 1964, published by Meridiane Publishing House in the Popular Republic of Romania, there was the printed caption of "industrial aspect from Mediaș", with the text written by the sender in Romanian: "Greetings from around here, with the landscape of 'Vitrometan'" (the name of the glass factory). Similarly, the text on a postcard sent from Bârlad in 1969, with the modern railway station represented in a picture: "My Dear, from Bârlad I am thinking of you all. I am looking forward to meeting you. Bârlad is old and new. [...]". Then, a picture postcard of Baia Mare, showing the river, green spaces, flower patches, blocks of flats, cars and people on the street, circulated in 1985, has the following text: "I send you a new

illustrated proof in support of my plea that Baia Mare is beautiful” – published by Meridiane Publishing House, with a photo by Fl. Șuler.

A picture postcard titled “View from Onești” represented a residential district (blocks of flats, flowers along the street and passers-by). It was circulated in 1963 with a text written on its back by the sender “Greetings from the beautiful town Onești”. Another postcard of Onești, depicting a very long row of blocks of flats (eight of them with 9 storeys), circulated in 1969, has on the back a text written by the sender saying: “Many greetings from the beautiful town Gheorghe Ghiorghiu-Dej”, it was misspelled (correct it is Gheorghiu, with an “e”, not with an “i”).

One Onești picture postcard circulated in 1967 had “Greetings from the beautiful town Gh. Gheorghiu Dej” written by the sender on the back of the postcard, representing Oituz Boulevard with a row of big blocks of flats neighbouring it. Oituz Boulevard of this town of Onești or Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej is crowded with new blocks of flats. These representations of the town are also to be found very often in the other picture postcards dedicated to the towns and cities of Romania during that period. On such a picture postcard representing the modern Onești (almost built from scratch), on its back, the sender writes a text that is not common to the usual greetings sent through postcards (this postcard was circulated in 1974): “Many greetings from this barren place”, signed by “your neighbour” and sent to Galați. It may be that this postcard was sent by someone newly arrived (moved to Onești), but also who feels alienated there. This does not seem to be a tourist sending the postcard, but somebody living in Onești at that moment.

4. Conclusions

First of all, referring to the industrial landscape, since 1989, almost all the large factories have disappeared, after being abandoned for a long time. As a result, these postcards have become valuable because of the captured images which no longer exist.

Secondly, this type of visual imagery helps in understanding people’s social, cultural, and economic life. Analysis of city representations supported people’s information consumption and intervened in their process of constructing self-representations.

Thirdly, and very important, the visual imagery of the period is very much reflecting the political and economic discourse of the institutions having the power. Those in power influenced the visual representation of the city both directly and indirectly. Shaping the city’s image through picture postcards was done either through the choice of images (directly) or through the process of society development (indirectly, such proofs of development appeared in postcard images). Picture postcards, representing modernity and urban life, were supposed to underline the progress, the modern urbanity of most of the Romanian cities. They are about the way the power represented itself: through its achievements. Picture postcards were just another way of telling the story promoted by the powerful ones.

The aesthetic and functional qualities of the new cities were refined and disclosed through picture postcards. The urban functions of dwelling, work, leisure and transportation were redefined through these picture postcards by means of which people were taught how to rightly read the new cityscape and which were the markers of its identity. Picture postcards illustrated the massive changes and reconstruction or modelling of these Romanian city centres.

Moreover, picture postcards were part of the construction of a narrative about the “new man” and the “new society”. Such picture postcards representations should have given people identity and pride, and, at the same time, they spoke of the presence of the Communist Party in the landscape. Thus, the history of these places, of this space, is also the history of power [40]. These representations of the new modern cityscape contributed to the construction of the “new man’s” mental framework, within the wider representation of the new socialist society/economy.

Picture postcards of the urban area shaped the locals’ (not only the tourists’) perception of the “right”, official or accepted way to look at the city and to understand urban living, people’s feeling of pride and, eventually, to construct one’s sense of place belonging together with that of belonging

to a national community. Picture postcards lent credibility to the government actions, to the political discourse and to that on planned state economy. Images were crucial to the nation project and to the Communist Party's project on Romania's development. Therefore, picture postcards were part of the norm, of the canonical way of experiencing social life in Romania, by way of prescribing how the social system should be perceived and approached.

Iconic status was gained by certain images and objectives (i.e. administrative, economic, cultural). However, there is no spectacle in the socialist picture postcards, they are serious, dignified, to be trusted, telling the truth. They did not offer much this possibility to the sender or addressee to interact with the image or text of the picture postcard. Engagement was in a serious way. They were not humorous, embellished or offering escape from the quotidian. Representations gave identity and pride, but they also underlined the presence of the Communist Party and of the communist working people in the landscape. Picture postcards were a tool for controlling also the locals' visual and mental representations about place identity, not only those of tourists from within and outside Romania. These pictures formed a meta-language encouraging people to get involved mentally in this discourse on the identity of the place and of themselves, as producers of the respective places (i.e. they worked for those places to look as developed as they did). Postcards informed people's sense of identity.

On picture postcards, we distinguished a cultural and economic inventory of Romanian identity icons, of Communist Party's discourse markers, presenting the positive assessment of the period, as well as the social construction of the nation and of territorial identity (i.e. place specificities and inhabitants' feeling of place belonging). The picture postcards, among other tools, created the visual narrative that national identity needed during its construction process. At present, they help "to foster a multifaceted and critical narrative of the place", so useful in decision-making on territorial development [41:142].

Finally, the picture postcards' imagery was part of the nationalist discourse, being well documented so far that "imagery plays an important part in nationalism" [28:205]. Our research proves the nationalising and ideologizing of the Romanians' gaze on their country, during the process of ordering the public space, the people's social and cultural lives, through the promoted representations of development.

Note: The included postcards are from the authors' personal collections. On using the illustrations included in this paper, in Romania, according to Law no. 8 from the 14th of March 1996, concerning the copyright and the related rights, Chapter 10, Article 85, Paragraph 2, photographs of letters, deeds, and documents of any kind, technical drawings and other such documents cannot benefit from the legal protection of copyright.
http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm?act_text?id=10396

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