



Policies for Promoting Entrepreneurship as a Means of Increasing Social Inclusion

Mirela Xheneti

Introduction

Poverty and social exclusion are among the biggest challenges governments across the world face. In both developed and developing countries, economic growth has benefited the wealthy more than the poor. According to the European Commission (2018),¹ one-quarter of the European Union population live at risk of poverty and social exclusion. The unemployed, in particular, have an almost 70 per cent risk of exclusion and poverty. Unsurprisingly, the disadvantaged and minority groups such as young people, migrants and the low skilled, are those who experience the greatest increases in unemployment. Against this backdrop, policy interventions to alleviate poverty and ensure the inclusion of excluded segments of the population in opportunities for economic improvement have very often had entrepreneurship encouragement as their focus. Entrepreneurship has been linked to social inclusion through self-employment and the promotion of equal opportunities for all as a vector for social and intergenerational solidarity and the creation of a poverty-free and more inclusive society (EU 2008).

The need to respond to these problems has also been accompanied by an increasing interest in the entrepreneurship literature in understanding

M. Xheneti (✉)

University of Sussex Business School, Brighton, UK

e-mail: m.xheneti@sussex.ac.uk

¹<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=751&langId=en>.

'everyday' entrepreneurial practices (Welter et al. 2017), that is in forms of entrepreneurship that do not comfortably fit with the stereotypical views of the hero mainstream entrepreneur. As scholars unpack the manifestations of these more mundane types of entrepreneurship (Imas et al. 2012; Ram et al. 2016) and the challenges and opportunities available to them, there have also been calls for rethinking the types of policies that might be more appropriate to target these different groups of individuals. Given the long-standing problem of poverty and social exclusion, these discussions on how entrepreneurship can act as a mechanism towards solving them are not new (Blackburn and Ram 2006; Carter et al. 2015). However, the evidence to date in relation to both our understanding of entrepreneurship among minority groups and the policies that could best target them is still thin and where it does exist is fragmented and lacking in rigour and robustness. On the one hand, the term minority entrepreneurship as used in this book is quite broad, including women, youth, immigrants and ethnic minority groups, the unemployed, seniors and people with disabilities (OECD/EU 2019), all with differing entrepreneurship rates and outcomes (Ram and Jones 2008; Southern 2011). On the other hand, the nature of contextual challenges this diversity entails are also very broad, encompassing issues such as inequality, poverty, migration, physical accessibility and economic sustainability among others (Smith et al. 2019), which occasionally have tried to be addressed by a small number of policies.

The aim of this chapter is to offer a review of the role that policy can play in addressing the challenges faced by minority and disadvantaged communities. This review is framed within wider debates on the enterprise policy literature on the effectiveness of enterprise policies (Arshed et al. 2014) and how a better understanding of the assumptions behind enterprise policies and the processes through which policies are designed and developed might lead to better-formulated policies in the future. The key contribution of this chapter, is to offer some pointers about the ways in which the needs and interests of minority entrepreneurs can be connected more clearly to governmental agendas and policy formulation that take place at the governmental level. The chapter is structured as follows. First, a critical review of the links between entrepreneurship and social inclusion is presented. This is followed by an analysis of the role of government in enterprise policy and their effectiveness, with a particular emphasis on the particularities of inclusive policies. The chapter continues with a proposed way of conceptualising the process through which inclusive enterprise policies are designed and developed, and how context can be incorporated more clearly when thinking about policy. The chapter will conclude by proposing some avenues for achieving inclusivity through entrepreneurship policies.

Entrepreneurship and Poverty and Social Exclusion

Entrepreneurship's potential contribution to economic growth and development has increasingly been recognised and its proponents point to its role in relation to employment generation, raising disposable incomes and escaping deprivation, external income generation, the development of supply chains, innovation, service provision (Audretsch and Keilbach 2004; Fritsch and Mueller 2004; Frankish et al. 2014) and to increased social inclusion (Fielden and Dawe 2004). In the fight against poverty and social exclusion, the EU's Social Agenda 2005–2020 intends to promote the social dimension of economic growth and the active participation of citizens in the society and the labour market. Social exclusion has been used as an encompassing term to describe the 'new forms of poverty and marginalisation' (European Commission 1992) and to capture more adequately the:

multi-dimensional nature of the mechanisms whereby individuals and groups are excluded from taking part in the social exchanges, from the component practices and rights of social integration. (European Commission 1992, p. 8)

At the individual level, social exclusion is expressed by a lack of jobs or income and lack of prospects for one's future and/or their children's future. However, it also encompasses specific groups such as women, ethnic minorities, young and old people or people with disabilities, who experience similar economic deprivation and social disadvantage (such as a lack of access to work, education or services), or a greater exposure to the negative aspects of life (such as crime), or an inadequate living environment (especially in inner cities and rural areas).

The assumptions behind encouraging entrepreneurship among minority and disadvantaged groups focus on the direct link between increased levels of enterprise and economic activity, and unemployment and social exclusion. Running one's own business offers a potential means of increasing income for dependents, as well as for individuals starting a business. In addition to contributing to the regeneration of disadvantaged areas and communities that face many space-specific barriers such as lack of skilled labour, low density of population and limited infrastructure (Acs and Malecki 2003; Steinberg et al. 2010), entrepreneurship can also:

provide flexible working patterns, reduce poverty, create increased self-confidence and empowerment, build personal and business assets, and support the formation of community networks. (Westall et al. 2000, p. 2)

By being predominantly local employers, small firms provide services to local markets and employ local people. When discussing the various sub-groups within minority and disadvantaged groups, entrepreneurship is considered as offering opportunities to turn specific characteristics like being a woman, ethnic minority, young, senior or disabled entrepreneur into market advantages such as meeting the specific needs of each of these groups and also avoiding discrimination in the labour market, or society more broadly (Fadahunsi et al. 2000; Steinberg et al. 2010; Wainwright et al. 2015; Kašperová and Kitching 2014; OECD/EU 2015). However, they face a large number of barriers such as lower levels of entrepreneurship skills, smaller networks, greater challenges in navigating the institutional environment and difficulties accessing financing (OECD/EC 2013).

The assumptions under which policies to address these issues lie have also been heavily criticised for not being:

empirically grounded...and failing to question the role and limitations of entrepreneurship in overcoming systemic structural and institutional forces driving exclusion. (Kevill et al. 2019, p. 77)

A wide body of literature has highlighted that the impact of both private and public schemes to generate greater enterprise and so create new jobs and wealth in areas of deprivation have been limited (Marlow 2006; Blackburn and Ram 2006; Howorth et al. 2009; Smith et al. 2019). Establishing businesses within areas of deprivation, where individuals have inadequate skills, education, finance, social capital and networks is very often a recipe for failure (Bates 1997). Deprived areas have limited resources as consumers and little potential for attracting new customers, and also provide less certainty to suppliers because of the difficult operating environment where they trade which compromises firm durability and/or growth (Marlow 2006). Given the importance that low-paid individuals place on income security, it is not surprising that many would see self-employment or entrepreneurship as incompatible with it (Stuart et al. 2016; Smith et al. 2019). Ethnic enterprise support has also seen mixed evidence of success with different ethnic groups showing different propensity to enterprise which requires more careful consideration of the characteristics of various groups.

Another prominent example is that of women's enterprise development programmes which have a long history of over 40 years. These programmes have attempted to provide assistance to women in the private sector to help them overcome the specific barriers they face through education, training and finance. Women entrepreneurship scholars claim that these individual remedies fail to account for what are structural and societal level problems (Foss

et al. 2019). Many women are segregated and subordinated in waged labour and issues such as sectoral concentration, credibility gaps, networks and social capital, undercapitalisation and access to finance, and firm growth and performance, are directly related to the prevailing gender systems (Marlow 2006; De Bruin et al. 2007; Jennings and Brush 2013). Incorporating an understanding of women's positionality in the social structures would provide a better grounding for policy initiatives (Ahl and Nelson 2015). Without a doubt the situation of women is more difficult in disadvantaged communities where they face more barriers to education and employment (for example) than men. A woman with a disability, a woman from an ethnic minority background, a woman who is a migrant worker, faces different challenges which need to be understood and properly addressed.

Social exclusion, and its persistence, is influenced by a bundle of economic, human, socio-cultural, regional, political and institutional influences. This highlights the need for multiple strategies and approaches that reflect the diversity of experiences and causal conditions of social exclusion (Rietdorf 2005; Marlow 2006; Smith et al. 2019). The implication is that: firstly, any policy intervention need to be sensitive to the specific combination of circumstances contributing to poverty and social exclusion; and secondly, that multiple dimensions and multiple causations almost certainly mean that no single type of policy intervention can address all aspects.

Entrepreneurship Policy Development in Relation to Social Inclusion

Governments implement a range of direct and indirect policies to support entrepreneurship and the small business sector. Many governmental measures focus on: (1) raising individuals' awareness of self-employment/business ownership as a career option (Stevenson and Lundström 2007); (2) reforming and improving regulatory regimes, in order to provide a 'level playing field' for enterprises of all sizes (Audretsch et al. 2007); and (3) creating and sustaining a stable macroeconomic environment conducive to encouraging start-ups and supporting small enterprises (Smallbone and Welter 2001). As importantly, enterprise policies provide direct support provision to start-ups and established small businesses (including finance, information and advice, and skills training), often to overcome size-related disadvantages (e.g. Bennett 2014). These different enterprise policies are developed at various levels (macro, meso and micro) and require effective cross-linkages between them,

as well as good coordination between the actors involved in their implementation, in order to have the potential to produce the intended outcomes of policies (Smallbone and Welter 2001; Xheneti and Smallbone 2008). Therefore, any discussion of the policy environment for enterprise development will be deficient if it is focused narrowly on direct support provision to start-ups, as the wider environment where businesses operate (including the status entrepreneurship has in the society) are equally, if not more, important (Storey and Greene 2010).

Stakeholder consultation with a wide range of representatives is important during the various stages of the policy process—formulation, implementation and evaluation (Smallbone and Welter 2001; Xheneti and Smallbone 2008). OECD/EU (2013) identified how ‘The Entrepreneurship Action Plan for Wales’ in 2001 was developed by incorporating a number of stakeholders (including businesses, public organisations and educational institutions) in order to generate awareness, as well as feedback, for the various parts of the plan. Interestingly, this consultation process proved particularly useful in highlighting the regional differences in support and enterprise needs. Generally, business inclusion in the policymaking process increases the likelihood that policy will be responsive to business needs and thereby acquire legitimacy among (potential) entrepreneurs. However, other literature has suggested that entrepreneurs underestimate the benefits of participating (Hart 2003), especially in the case of minority and disadvantaged groups. For example, specific organisations have focused on helping immigrant business owners to understand the systems of the host country, as well as in overcoming barriers to engagement with support organisations (Blackburn et al. 2008).

A variety of types of targeted policy interventions have sought to promote and support entrepreneurship in disadvantaged groups, including women, young and senior people, ethnic minorities, recently arrived immigrants and deprived areas. Such initiatives cover a wide range of types of support including access to finance, business counselling and advice, mentoring, training, managed workspace and incubators. All of these policy interventions have in common their focus on capacity building among these groups as entrepreneurship and management skills could support them both in self and paid employment (OECD/EU 2015). Direct measures such as micro-finance or the extension of very small loans (microloans) to those who are not considered bankable (according to prevailing commercial banking standards) have been very popular forms of support, especially after the financial crisis of 2008 (Mosley and Steel 2004; Lamandini 2008). In 2013, 41 per cent of microloans were given to women (3 per cent increase compared to 2011) and 18 per cent to ethnic minorities (Bending et al. 2014). However, different

countries have adopted various types of micro-crediting schemes and their economic and social outcomes have been different (Rouse and Jayawarna 2006), which brings attention to the need to understand the institutional set-up of different countries and the governance structures at regional and local levels. Public initiatives that simultaneously address a number of the barriers that these groups face have proven to be more effective, but they are costlier and not attractive to policymakers (OECD/EU 2013).

Good policy delivery requires coordination of state and regional support programmes and building institutional capacity at the regional and local levels, given that these are the organisations who will have direct contact with the minority or disadvantaged groups. For example, a study of youth entrepreneurship in Lithuania (OECD/EU 2015) suggested that policy delivery should be done through public-private partnerships, as it was not only cost-effective, but it would also tap into the expertise of the private sector (OECD 2005). This was also a way to ensure good vertical links (national–regional) by engaging with consultants or other private organisations based in the regions. Enterprise Lithuania, one of the main government organisations supporting entrepreneurship, possessed a list of consultants who were utilised for various business support schemes. An accredited body of consultants was also created in order to ensure the efficiency and quality of the support services. This was a very good step towards ensuring the quality of the services delivered to start-ups and businesses and the effective use of government funding. However, many consultants did not have any inclination to work in remote or underdeveloped areas of the country, where arguably the needs for support among the unemployed youth were higher. There was no clear plan on how to increase the capacities of consultants or other regional actors that could support the delivery of training schemes in these areas. Good practice entrepreneurship policy for social inclusion needs to be sensitive to the specific characteristics of the groups it is targeting and their localities.

However, research suggests that the outcomes of enterprise policies have not been straightforward, despite government expenditure on entrepreneurship support often being higher than that for police or education (Lundstrom et al. 2014). This is related to a lack of clear goals and objectives of different policy measures (Storey 2000) or poor evaluation techniques (Pons Rotger et al. 2012). Some scholars go further to suggest that there has been a disconnect between the agendas of those who make policy and the needs and interests of those for whom the policy is designed (Perren and Jennings 2005; Arshed et al. 2014). In a recent review of the Enterprise Allowance Scheme in UK, Smith et al. (2019) suggested that the disengagement of target beneficiaries in policy development has been happening for several decades,

also accompanied by a reluctance to generate clear objectives and subsequent meaningful measures to afford effective evaluation. The evaluation of enterprise policy, more generally, has rarely relied on longitudinal data and as some argue, this compromises the scientifically driven robustness of evidence on the effectiveness of policies (Storey 2014; Arshed et al. 2016).

Care should be given to not only address the ‘weak’ version of the discourse on inclusivity of minority groups or the barriers that affect their unemployment or engagement in enterprise. The case of UK policies suggests that initiatives that mainly address barriers would risk losing focus on the structural issues that cause and sustain exclusion (Blackburn and Ram 2006). Thus, an understanding of the specific contextual features that have given rise to, or can facilitate, the variety of social inclusion policies among other forms of support can increase the understanding of the ways that policy can tackle poverty and social exclusion through entrepreneurship. When developing inclusive policies responsive to the needs of various contexts/groups, it is important not to rely uncritically on adopting/adapting policy ideas originating elsewhere, but to pay close attention to contextual conditions.

Understanding the Policymaking Process—Policy Exchanges and Learning

The issues of disconnect between policy and its goals and the policy (in)effectiveness more generally, have also led to a fast increasing body of literature that aims to understand the policy process itself (e.g. Arshed et al. 2014; Xheneti 2017). One consistent theme in this group of studies is the need to shift away from a pure focus on the outcomes of enterprise policy towards policy formulation (see also Dennis 2011; Smallbone 2016) and the role of ideas, discourses, normative assumptions and most importantly, context. In addition to this, there is a need to recognise how policy ideas and solutions develop through different policy exchanges between national and regional actors, but also between international and national actors whose interactions certainly affect the processes through which policies are translated at different levels (Xheneti 2017). The need to pay attention to how policies on minority and disadvantaged groups are developed and translated at the national/regional level comes at a time when processes of globalisation and Europeanisation have improved the communication and exchange of ideas and knowledge, and have led to many forms of policy transfer between countries (Evans 2017). Theoretically, policy transfer has been defined as:

the process by which the knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system. (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000, p. 5)

Transfer entails an intentional decision to borrow policy ideas from elsewhere. Policymakers choose policy transfer to respond to economic, political or social problems or to pressures from international ‘policy pushers’ such as the European Union or various international organisations (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; Xheneti and Kitching 2011). Governments have drawn upon OECD and EU documents to develop enterprise policies, promote best policy practices and initiate international benchmarking processes to compare national policy outcomes (Stevenson and Lundström 2007). In the case of inclusive entrepreneurship policies for minority and disadvantaged groups, the EU and OECD have played a particularly important role in not only raising awareness of the benefits of entrepreneurship for this group, but also through sharing ideas and knowledge about how these policies might look in practice by providing examples from various countries in their ‘Missing Entrepreneurs’ series. As importantly, they have recently launched a ‘Better Entrepreneurship Policy Tool’² whose aim is to provide various stakeholders with a tool to rate and reflect on inclusive entrepreneurship policies in their countries/regions, as well as learn from various national good practices.

The policy transfer literature offers a number of conceptual distinctions of relevance to the study of policy exchange and learning between different countries. First, transfer might include policy goals, structure and content, instruments and administrative techniques, institutions, ideologies, ideas, attitudes, concepts and negative lessons (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000). ‘Soft’ (or ‘discursive’) transfer refers to the emulation of ideas, concepts and attitudes; ‘hard’ transfer refers to the implementation of policy programmes, actions and tools (Evans and Davies 1999). For example, even if various governments can agree on the ways poverty and social exclusion should be addressed, there is a need to focus on implementation that takes into account country/regional conditions (Evans 2009). Governments might also import entrepreneurship and social inclusion policy discourses for symbolic reasons, to increase legitimacy in the eyes of powerful domestic and international stakeholders, even if this sometimes means feigning, rather than genuinely implementing, particular policy programmes (Xheneti and Kitching 2011). Alternatively, policymakers might go beyond soft transfer and implement programmes, either for symbolic reasons or because they genuinely believe

²<https://www.betterentrepreneurship.eu/>.

these policies will solve the perceived problems. Second, transfer processes can be conceptualised in terms of a continuum representing the degree of constraint faced by policy borrowers/importers, from fully coerced through to fully voluntary, neither of which are likely to be real-world cases. More realistic are the various degrees of obligated transfer arising out of conditionalities imposed by international organisations, the need for international acceptance, or simply the need to solve a domestic policy problem drawing on lessons from abroad (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000). Different countries have different dependencies on international organisations for expertise and the necessary funding to engage in policy transfer (Evans 2017). Therefore, the international community will always have a major role in the transfer and in setting developmental agendas. Third, the literature on policy transfer has not established clear criteria to be used in order to judge policy success/failure (Marsh and Sharman 2009). Policy lenders and borrowers might have different definitions of success, depending on their particular aims (Unalan 2009). Although some advancements have been made to conceptualise policy transfer failure (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; Dolowitz and Medearis 2009), they have been difficult to use in practice. Policy failure has been attributed to three conditions: (1) uninformed transfer when transfer is based on inaccurate or insufficient information about the original policy; (2) incomplete transfer when crucial features of what made the policy successful in the original country are not transferred, such as capacity building on the institutional side which includes business support organisations and officers working within public agencies (OECD/EU 2015); and (3) inappropriate transfer when there are essential contextual differences between the policy-originating country and the policy-transferring one, where the economic, political, social and ideological conditions of the exporting country are absent in the importing one. In many countries the value placed on entrepreneurship as a career option is very low. As one illustration, Wainwright et al. (2015) suggested that youth or senior entrepreneurs face several pressures from peers to pursue a mainstream career rather than a risky entrepreneurial one.

While the 'Better Entrepreneurship Policy Tool' is a recently developed mechanism of policy exchange, economic and social problem solutions in the EU have been attempted by a transnational communication transfer mechanism such as the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). The OMC tries to integrate the supranational EU policies with those at the governmental level. EU enterprise and social policy are both governed by OMC governance mechanisms (rather than by legally binding regulations) coordinating national governments' policies towards EU objectives, while respecting member (and endorsing non-member) states' autonomy in achieving these

objectives. Under OMC, member states pursue EU-defined objectives, translated into national-level indicators and targets, which are subject to periodic monitoring, evaluation and peer review in order to compare progress and identify best practices (Tholoniati 2010). The aim of such 'soft law' governance mechanism is to facilitate the exchange of experiences and reciprocal learning, since the OMC can lead to experimentation, learning and the development of new procedures (Begg and Berghman 2002) and can provide flexibility to the policy process (Radaelli 2003). The OMC is designed as a governance mechanism that can promote learning and innovation because it offers possibilities to: (1) destabilise existing understandings; (2) bring together people with diverse viewpoints in settings that require sustained deliberation about problem-solving; (3) facilitate erosion of boundaries between both policy domains and stakeholders; (4) reconfigure policy networks; (5) encourage decentralised experimentation and produce information on innovation; (6) require sharing of good practice and experimental results; (7) encourage actors to compare results with those of the best performers in any area; and (8) oblige actors collectively to redefine objectives and policies (Mosher and Trubek 2003). Despite the benefits of learning from each other that are embedded in the OMC and policy transfer processes more generally, the evidence has been less than satisfactory, primarily as a result of institutional inertias (Zeitlin 2005). The OMC processes do not allow for a more intense exchange of experiences between national actors and for peer reviews, and especially do not allow for participation of regional and non-governmental actors which are the ones to influence and implement policy at a local level (Mosher and Trubek 2003; Zeitlin 2005). Most importantly, implementation of policy reforms is not only dependent on new insights, but also on a firm political commitment (i.e. power).

This discussion, together with the example of the EU, suggests that different contexts are home to different sets of actors with their own interests and strategies, who face different opportunities and constraints in institutionalising enterprise policy fields. Crucially, different countries are home to different understandings or interpretations of social inclusion and entrepreneurship based on historical and institutional contexts which poses questions regarding the way policy objectives at a transnational level will influence national discourses, identities and policies. In this context, the different ways in which the social inclusion discourses are translated into specific policies and programmes, and the opportunities and pressures that influence the policy delivery process, need to be studied in-depth by highlighting the institutional features of relevance and the governance structures at a national, regional and local level, plus their interaction. Policies on social

inclusion need the participation of a number of regional and local actors, and the development of local governance structures. This requires further research on institutional contexts, both formal and social, and the scope they offer for the development of these types of governance mechanisms and for policy transfer and learning at a regional and local level. The different dimensions of poverty and social exclusion have in common the need to understand the lived-in experiences of the minority or disadvantaged groups in various areas or among various groups, especially when making any policy intervention that is culturally sensitive and context-adaptive. There is a need for policy to go beyond the 'cold' statistical indicators, to evaluate how the economic, social and institutional dimensions are combined with the ways that social exclusion is experienced, when seeking to achieve certain policy outcomes. Further work on these issues would give more visibility to the multiplicity of the institutional and sociocultural contexts of policymaking that affect how policy is designed and developed. The context-turn (Welter 2011; Welter and Gartner 2016) experienced in entrepreneurship needs to find its way into the enterprise policymaking process, particularly when considering inclusive entrepreneurship policies.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to offer a review of the assumptions behind inclusive entrepreneurship policies and how an understanding of the policymaking process might lead to better formulation and outcomes of these policies. The chapter was set within a context of increased attention to less mainstream forms of entrepreneurship among minority and disadvantaged groups, as well as an increasing interest in finding solutions to problems such as poverty and social exclusion. By reviewing the mixed evidence to date in relation to both enterprise policies more broadly and inclusive policies in particular, the chapter acts as a call for more research on minority and disadvantaged groups and their lived experiences in particular contexts.

The nature of the barriers that these groups face has received considerable attention and has also been the focus of a number of different policies over the years. As the review showed, a wide body of literature has focused on the issues these groups face with skills, finance, networking and social capital. As a result, policy has mainly focused on direct interventions that aim to build capacity among minority and disadvantaged entrepreneurs through (for example) access to finance, business counselling and advice, mentoring and training. However, the same attention has not been placed to understanding

and addressing the structural issues that lead to these barriers. As importantly, the way policies are designed and developed needs to be more focal in research in order to better understand what causes the disconnect between policies and the groups they aim to target.

The chapter proposed an alternative conceptualisation of the policy process that aims to make context a fully integrated part of the policymaking process by being aware of how policy ideas and exchanges among different countries or regions are often implicated in the design of policies that might not be receptive of local conditions. Focusing on issues of context in policy design and development would lead to a better understanding of the assumptions that policy actors in different countries use in relation to the social inclusion of minority and disadvantaged groups and their entrepreneurial activities. Crucially, taking context more seriously would lead to better incorporation in policy development of the lived experiences of each of these different groups. Taken together, these issues would support the development of inclusive policies that positively connect the needs and interests of minority entrepreneurs with government agendas and policy development. Overall, opening up the 'black box' of policy formulation and development in entrepreneurship studies would assist the greater understanding of (inclusive) enterprise policies more widely.

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