Good Practices Inventory and Why It Matters to Urban Health and Inclusivity

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Abstract. This paper presents a structured methodological approach to constructing thematic good practices inventories for urban transformation, based on two guidebooks developed by the Izmir Planning Agency in coordination with the Turkish Healthy Cities Association and Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. The series operationalizes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the One Health framework, and the WHO Healthy Cities Phase VII themes (6Ps), addressing contemporary urban challenges through an equity-focused lens.

The first volume, Good Practices for the Healthy Cities of the Future, centers on projects that integrate environmental, human, and animal health, while the second, Good Practices for Disability-Inclusive Cities of the Future, extends the framework to include rights-based urban design and inclusive governance. Across both volumes, a multi-phase evaluation process was applied, incorporating SDG alignment, replicability, digital visibility, and spatial scale.

The findings demonstrate how good practices, when systematically categorized, support comparative learning and local policy adaptation. Key insights highlight the importance of thematic breadth, the underrepresentation of certain dimensions such as animal health, and challenges in scaling successful pilots due to institutional, regulatory, or funding barriers. Future volumes will expand on these lessons, including a forthcoming guide on elderly health.

Izmir Metropolitan Municipality also plans to implement local healthy city solutions based on these good practices, aligning global insights with its urban development strategies. Overall, the Good Practices series contributes to an emerging urban planning culture in which health, inclusivity, and sustainability are jointly pursued as central public priorities.

Keywords: Healthy Cities · One Health · Sustainable Urban Development · Good Practice Inventories

1 Introduction

The growing urgency for inclusive and health-oriented urban development has encouraged local governments to seek practical and adaptable models grounded in international collaboration and evidence-based strategies [3, 6]. In response, the Good Practices series was initiated to systematically compile and evaluate global urban projects that demonstrate how cities can respond effectively to challenges such as public health, climate

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O. Gervasi et al. (Eds.): ICCSA 2025 Workshops, LNCS 15897, pp. 356–369, 2026.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-97660-5_24

change, and social inequality [5, 6]. These guides aim to translate international objectives such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the One Health approach into actionable insights for municipal governance and spatial planning.

The first volume, Good Practices for the Healthy Cities of the Future, examined how urban health can be strengthened through environmental awareness, digital transformation, mental well-being strategies, and community-based resilience efforts. It introduced a classification system organized around health dimensions, spatial impacts, thematic keywords, and measurable alignment with global goals. The approach emphasized the importance of integrated planning, intersectoral cooperation, and localized implementation.

Following this groundwork, the second volume, Good Practices for Disability-Inclusive Cities of the Future, expands the framework by addressing disability as a key factor in equitable urban development. Instead of limiting the scope to physical accessibility alone, it brings forward a rights-based and inclusive design perspective, incorporating a wide range of needs including those of people with invisible disabilities. This volume reinforces the methodological coherence of the series by using the same categorization system and by addressing health, access, and representation together.

Together, the two books present a structured body of knowledge designed to support cities in designing healthier and more inclusive environments. This coherence enables thematic comparability while also allowing each volume to explore distinct policy dimensions, from environmental resilience to social equity. The Good Practices series will continue to grow, addressing additional aspects of urban sustainability through future volumes. Although the selected practices originate from diverse urban contexts, their alignment with the SDG framework and their emphasis on scalable, rights-based, and participatory approaches enhance their potential for replication across different cities facing similar challenges. By focusing on actionable models and cross-contextual applicability, the series serves as a long-term resource for local governments, practitioners, and researchers who aim to create cities that leave no one behind (Figs. 1 and 2).

1.1 Background Motivation

Urban areas play a critical role in addressing contemporary environmental and societal challenges. The Turkish Healthy Cities Association actively works to improve urban health, enhance social well-being, and protect the environment. In an era marked by multiple crises, cities are expected to develop balanced strategies encompassing social justice, environmental sustainability, public health, and economic development. This guide has been inspired by the “One Health” approach, which acknowledges the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health.



Fig. 1. Cover of Good Practices for the Healthy Cities of the Future

Encouraging the collection of exemplary international practices, this guide aims to support cities in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Selected projects focus on enhancing social resilience and delivering integrated solutions that reflect ecological, social, and economic priorities. These examples serve not only local governments but also academia, civil society, and all relevant stakeholders as a resource for capacity-building and knowledge-sharing.

Urbanization and Public Health. The historical transition to settled life has driven the evolution of urban models shaped by infrastructure systems, technological progress, biological and social needs, planning practices, and urban aesthetics. Public health interventions have long influenced city design, for instance, the development of sewerage systems to prevent mass diseases like plague. As of 2022, approximately 57% of the world population resides in urban areas, with projections indicating an increase to 66% by 2050. Rapid urbanization, especially in developing countries, contributes to the emergence of unsustainable and unhealthy living conditions that affect not only humans but also nature and other species. Since the mid-twentieth century, movements addressing environmental protection, animal rights, and climate change have questioned the human-centered development framework. Planning cities to support all forms of life humans



Fig. 2. Cover of Good Practices for Disability-Inclusive Cities of the Future

and non-humans alike, has become an ethical and practical necessity. David Attenborough, a prominent advocate of biodiversity, has emphasized that protected areas alone are insufficient to halt ecological degradation, urging the use of everyday spaces such as gardens and roadside areas for wildlife conservation. In line with the One Health approach, cities must become part of the solution.

From an ethical standpoint, protecting the rights of non-human beings and creating healthy habitats for all species is paramount. Ecologically, natural systems provide essential resources such as water, food, and air, underlining the urgency of preserving ecosystem functions. The sustainability of cities depends on maintaining these life-supporting systems. Cultural and natural heritage are also interlinked. Studies have observed that individuals residing in areas with preserved ecological and cultural assets tend to experience higher mental well-being and increased cultural productivity. Therefore, the notion of "cultural health" emerges at the intersection of the three axes of the One Health approach.

Contemporary urban development is increasingly influenced by technological advancements, including artificial intelligence, infrastructure systems, and innovations in energy, water, and waste management. Alongside these changes, global trends such

as climate change, loss of natural spaces, migration, and rising health demands redefine the parameters of livable urban environments. Within this context, adopting a holistic One Health perspective is no longer optional but essential to shaping sustainable cities and their future ecosystems.

2 Literature

The integration of health, inclusivity, and sustainability into urban governance has prompted a growing emphasis on practice-based frameworks that bridge local action with global development goals. Within this context, structured good practice inventories have emerged as a crucial mechanism for analyzing how urban projects respond to challenges such as climate change, inequality, and access to services [1, 2]. However, while the SDGs provide a normative framework, there remains a lack of systematic tools that translate them into actionable and localized guidance for municipalities.

Good Practices for the Healthy Cities of the Future and Good Practices for Disability-Inclusive Cities of the Future respond directly to this need. Both volumes were developed through a rigorous multi-phase review of over 10,000 international examples drawn from curated databases as seen on Table 1, including WHO Urban Governance Initiatives, UN-Habitat's Urban Agenda Platform, Connective Cities, SmartCitiesWorld, and the International Disability Alliance. Selection criteria were tightly coupled with SDG targets particularly SDG 3 (Health), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities) along with indicators such as digital visibility, replicability across contexts, and thematic relevance to the One Health framework.

Informed by the WHO's 2016 Global Report on Urban Health and the Phase VII themes of the Healthy Cities Project (People, Planet, Place, Participation, Prosperity, and Peace), the first volume emphasized cross-sectoral health interventions, including urban biodiversity restoration, mental health in public spaces, and integrated food systems [3]. The second volume advanced this structure by focusing on disability-inclusive design, preventive disability services, and universal accessibility, adopting a rights-based perspective consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [7].

Recent literature has also pointed to the growing urgency of data-informed policy design in urban health. Urban SDG platforms and regional innovation networks (e.g. BABLE, Metropolis, and UCLG-Agenda 21 for Culture) have contributed significantly to the visibility of localized experiments; however, few have offered a classification model that incorporates thematic keywords, spatial typologies, and multidimensional health impacts as comprehensively as this series.

Both guides propose a scalable and transferable model for documenting good practices, characterized by a matrix of meta-keywords, One Health axes (human, environmental, and animal health), and SDG alignment scores. This model aligns with ongoing research emphasizing the importance of knowledge infrastructures and transdisciplinary learning mechanisms in urban governance.

Table 1. List of Databases

Database of Good Practices for the Healthy Cities of the Future	
World Health Organization & UN-Habitat. (2016).	AbilityNet: A digital world accessible to all
World Health Organization: Case studies	BABLE
WHO initiative on urban governance for health and well-being	Best Buddies
Centre for International Climate Research (CICERO)	C40
Connective Cities	Common Ground
European Commission Intelligent Cities Challenge	Connective Cities
Global Cities Hub	The World Bank
International Observatory on Participatory Democracy Metropolis	European Commission of Mayors for Climate Challenge
Project for Public Spaces (PPS)	Tech4Good Marketplace
SmartCitiesWorld	Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy Southeast Asia
UCLG - Agenda 21 for Culture	Global Disability Rights Now
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)	Humanity & Inclusion

(*continued*)

2.1 Historical and Conceptual Background

The transformation of cities from early settlements to contemporary urban systems has not only been a story of demographic and technological shifts but increasingly of aligning urban development with planetary sustainability and social justice. At the heart of this shift is the global commitment to the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which serve as a framework for integrating ecological, social, and economic priorities into urban governance.

Among these goals, SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) specifically addresses urban areas, advocating for inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities. However, as emphasized in both volumes of Good Practices for the Healthy Cities of the Future and Good Practices for Disability-Inclusive Cities of the Future, meaningful implementation of this goal is deeply entangled with other SDGs, such as SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). These interconnections demand holistic governance approaches that acknowledge health as a cross-cutting issue and cities as critical actors in global sustainability.

Table 1. (*continued*)

Database of Good Practices for the Healthy Cities of the Future	
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)	Inclusive Design Research Centre
UN-Habitat - Urban Agenda Platform	International Disability Alliance
UN-Habitat - Waste Wise Cities	Metropolis
University of Oxford - Nature-based Solutions Initiative	Observation of Public Sector Innovation
Urban SDG Knowledge Platform	SmartCitiesWorld
Whitley Fund for Nature	Special Olympics
NetZero Cities	UN Disability Studies
One Health 4 Cities	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)
Oppla	UNICEF
Urban Future - CityChangers.org	

SDGs, while universally adopted, often lack localized frameworks that can translate their ambitious targets into practical urban strategies. This gap becomes especially visible in cities experiencing rapid urbanization, where infrastructural strain, socio-economic inequalities, and environmental degradation compound the complexity of sustainable development. UN-Habitat's 2022 World Cities Report projected that by 2050, over two-thirds of the global population will reside in urban areas, placing unprecedented pressure on city systems. The climate crisis amplifies this pressure, as urban areas currently account for nearly 70% of global carbon emissions, largely from buildings and transportation sectors [5].

In this context, the SDGs are increasingly interpreted not as isolated goals, but as an integrated roadmap requiring transdisciplinary, equity-centered responses. The One Health framework emphasizing the health linkages between people, animals, and ecosystems has emerged as a critical interpretive lens for understanding the urban role in addressing global challenges.

3 Methodology

The good practice guides developed under the Izmir Planning Agency follow a standardized, multi-step methodology designed to maintain consistency, thematic clarity, and applicability across different urban contexts. Each volume is grounded in the One Health framework and contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with thematic emphasis adapted to the specific focus of each guide. This approach is used in both volumes of the series: Good Practices for the Healthy Cities of the Future and Good Practices for Disability-Inclusive Cities of the Future.

3.1 Database Identification and Review

The first step involved a systematic review across multiple international databases that catalogue good practice initiatives launched after 2015, ensuring alignment with the institutionalization of the SDGs in global policy discourse. This review covered over 10,000 examples from sources such as WHO Urban Governance Initiatives, UN-Habitat's Urban Agenda Platform, Connective Cities, SmartCitiesWorld, and the International Disability Alliance [1, 2]. The sources were filtered using the following criteria. Sources had to include actionable, implemented practices that contribute to various SDGs, not only conceptual or policy-level frameworks. Databases were required to provide systematically structured listings and demonstrate geographic diversity. Practices that were not yet implemented or were still in observation or data collection phases were excluded. Sources lacking concrete good practice content, such as those containing only academic articles or news items, were eliminated. Duplicative sources based on identical datasets were excluded to preserve originality.

As a result, **5,693** practices were recorded for the *Healthy Cities* guide and **4,703** for the *Disability-Inclusive Cities* guide across verified databases.

Initial Filtering Phase. An initial filtering phase was conducted to ensure thematic alignment.

For the Healthy Cities guide, practices aligned with SDG 3 (Health), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), SDG 15 (Life on Land), and intersected with SDG 13 (Climate Action) were prioritized.

For the Disability-Inclusive Cities guide, practices had to align with SDG 3 and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), especially those targeting disadvantaged populations.

In both guides, examples contributing to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) although not strictly under the One Health framework were retained due to their relevance to urban well-being and intermunicipal learning objectives.

Final Selection Criteria. Shortlisted practices were evaluated using standardized criteria as presented in Table 2 of the guide. These included digital visibility, defined as the project's presence and accessibility on verified platforms, replicability, defined as the adaptability of the initiative across different locations and institutions, geographic balance, ensuring that no single region was overrepresented, and award or recognition, which applied mainly to the Healthy Cities projects and indicated preference for initiatives with international acknowledgment.

Table 2. Evaluation Criteria for Good Practice Selection

Evaluation Criteria	Description
Digital Visibility	Open accessibility and presence on verified platforms
Replicability	Potential for geographic and institutional adaptation
Geographic Balance	Avoidance of regional overrepresentation
Award & Recognition	(For Healthy Cities) Preference for internationally recognized initiatives

This phase finalized 440 practices for Healthy Cities and 400 for Disability-Inclusive Cities.

Categorization and Thematic Structuring. Each selected practice was assessed for its relevance to the **One Health framework** including contributions to human, animal, and environmental health. Their distribution was analyzed to support thematic balance across the guide.

- The *Healthy Cities* guide classified practices under **16 inclusive keywords**, including climate, biodiversity, digitalization, food security, energy, housing, and social participation.
- The *Disability-Inclusive Cities* guide used a **tiered categorization**: 5 **primary keywords** (accessibility, participation, planning, basic needs, environment) and 20 **secondary thematic tags**, including policy, education, mobility, and safety.

Proportional representation based on these classifications guided the final selection of practices included in the printed guides.

One Health Distribution Analysis. Human, Animal, and Environmental Health. To ensure thematic alignment with the One Health paradigm, each shortlisted case was categorized according to its primary health dimension: human health, animal health, and environmental health. The distribution analysis allowed for the identification of gaps, thematic saturation, and potential synergies across practice areas.

In the Healthy Cities guide, the percentage distribution of selected cases across the three One Health dimensions is as follows (Table 3).

Table 3. Health Dimension for Good Practice Selection – Healthy Cities Guide

Health Dimension	Percentage of Cases
Human Health	66%
Environmental Health	21%
Animal Health	13%

In contrast, the Disability-Inclusive Cities guide showed a stronger concentration on human and environmental well-being, reflecting the specific focus of the volume (Table 4).

This distribution analysis not only reinforces the guides' adherence to the One Health framework but also offers municipalities and practitioners a quantifiable overview of where most interventions are currently concentrated. The results help highlight underrepresented dimensions, particularly animal health and provide a basis for rebalancing future programmatic focus areas.

Publication and Knowledge Sharing. To balance analytical depth and reader accessibility:

The *Healthy Cities* guide presented **50 practices**, while The *Disability-Inclusive Cities* guide presented **40 practices** in their respective publications.

Table 4. Health Dimension for Good Practice Selection – Disability-Inclusive Cities Guide

Health Dimension	Percentage of Cases
Human Health	74%
Environmental Health	19%
Animal Health	7%

In both volumes, the **full database** of evaluated practices was made accessible through an **open online platform** to support broader learning, benchmarking, and policy transfer.

4 Discussion and Limitations

The comparative analysis of the two volumes, Good Practices for the Healthy Cities of the Future and Good Practices for Disability-Inclusive Cities of the Future, reveals a shared methodological architecture that enables a layered interpretation of urban health and inclusivity [1, 2]. Both books utilize a matrix-based classification system that incorporates SDG relevance, thematic keywords, spatial scale, and One Health dimensions, allowing each project to be situated within broader urban governance frameworks [3, 4].

A key finding across both volumes is the operationalization of the One Health approach beyond public health discourse. In the first volume, the concept is illustrated through interventions that integrate environmental restoration, active mobility, urban food systems, and mental well-being strategies [1]. Projects such as the Clean Urban Waterways initiative, which harnesses natural water flows and wind currents to capture plastic waste before it reaches the oceans [9], or Mexico City's Green Challenge, which strengthens urban green infrastructure and biodiversity through large-scale revegetation efforts (Green Challenge), are not only environmentally sustainable but also enhance social cohesion and mental resilience. These examples underscore the interdependence of urban ecology and collective health.

In the second volume, the One Health framework is expanded to include rights-based urban design, where physical, sensory, and cognitive accessibility are recognized as health determinants [2]. Projects like the M4Guide mobility assistant app in Berlin (M4Guide) or the Sense Maps initiative in the United Kingdom demonstrate how inclusive infrastructure and social service models contribute to population-level well-being, particularly in contexts where urban services are fragmented or unevenly distributed [2]. The emphasis on invisible disabilities and preventable disability services marks a novel contribution to urban health literature, linking early intervention strategies with long-term sustainability goals [7].

Both volumes highlight the value of transferring international practices to local planning contexts [4]. While the first guide leans toward ecological and systemic transformations such as food sovereignty, heat-resilient design, and green infrastructure [1], the second focuses more on institutional innovation, including inclusive service governance, social care protocols, and rights-based digital accessibility [2]. This difference in

orientation illustrates the flexibility of the good practice framework in accommodating both structural and service-level reforms.

Another point of convergence lies in the attention to spatial justice. Projects in both volumes are not merely technical interventions but also responses to social inequities manifested in space, whether through unequal access to green areas, uneven distribution of health services, or the inaccessibility of urban infrastructure for persons with disabilities [4]. The inventory system's inclusion of spatial typologies such as neighborhood, district, and city-wide scales allows for assessing the replicability of interventions across geographies with different levels of institutional capacity [1, 2].

However, when examined in depth, many individual projects reveal context-specific limitations that affect their replicability, scalability, or long-term effectiveness. In the Healthy Cities guide, Mexico City's Green Challenge highlights difficulties in sustaining long-term maintenance due to the need for cross-sector collaboration and consistent community engagement [8]. The Clean Urban Waterways initiative faces challenges in balancing ecological waste interception technologies with local financial constraints and the need for sustained community engagement and education efforts [9]. GreenQuays, Breda's urban river regeneration project, while highly innovative in integrating nature-inclusive quay design, is situated in a European context with strong institutional support, raising questions about its adaptability to municipalities with fewer financial or technical capacities [10].

In the Disability-Inclusive Cities guide, the M4Guide project in Berlin depends heavily on robust municipal data infrastructures and high levels of technical literacy, limiting its applicability in cities with less developed digital ecosystems [11]. The Sense Maps project in the United Kingdom identifies barriers related to retrofitting historic urban areas, where regulatory constraints and physical limitations complicate implementation. Additionally, the Bogotá Urban Governance for Health program, despite its strong emphasis on citizen participation, has reported challenges in institutionalizing participatory mechanisms within formal governance frameworks, especially after external donor support ends.

A further thematic limitation emerges from the underrepresentation of animal health within the One Health framework [6]. While examples such as the Walkin' Pets initiative address mobility aids for disabled animals, they remain isolated cases, and there is little integration of animal health concerns into broader urban sustainability planning.

Overall, the series demonstrates a strong link between data transparency and policy learning [4]. By prioritizing cases with publicly available evaluation tools, participatory elements, and verifiable outcomes, the inventories function not only as repositories of inspiration but also as instruments of accountability and policy transfer [3].

These findings suggest that when good practices are methodically categorized and critically analyzed, they not only highlight what has worked elsewhere but also support the development of context-sensitive planning frameworks [1, 2]. Moving forward, future editions of the Good Practices series could enhance their relevance by systematically including critical lessons from implementation, broadening thematic representation (particularly in underexplored areas like animal health), and capturing more diverse regional

perspectives. Such improvements would strengthen the series' contribution to an emerging planning culture in which urban health and inclusion are not siloed concerns but jointly negotiated public values.

5 Conclusion

The Good Practices series offers a concrete contribution to urban policy development by systematizing international examples through a shared, multi-dimensional framework [1, 2]. Rather than presenting isolated case studies, the series introduces a structured method for cataloging, analyzing, and contextualizing projects using thematic focus, spatial impact, and replicability [3, 4]. This approach enables local governments, researchers, and practitioners to address complex planning challenges such as climate adaptation, public health, and social inclusion through real-world applications that align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the One Health framework [3].

From the Healthy Cities volume, Mexico City's Green Challenge demonstrates how large-scale urban revegetation can strengthen climate resilience and biodiversity, although the project also highlights coordination challenges across municipal departments and stakeholder groups [8]. The Clean Urban Waterways project shows how engineered interception systems can prevent plastic waste from entering marine environments while offering environmental benefits and raising community awareness [9]. The GreenQuays Project in Breda illustrates how nature-inclusive urban river regeneration can enhance environmental goals and climate resilience, although its implementation relies on specialized design methods and institutional partnerships, which may limit its immediate transferability to less-resourced cities [10].

In the Disability-Inclusive Cities volume, Berlin's M4Guide project shows how digital mobility tools for visually impaired users can enhance urban accessibility but depend on strong digital infrastructures and cross-sector data cooperation [11]. The AT2030 Inclusive Infrastructure initiative in Ulaanbaatar, Varanasi, and Surakarta demonstrates that inclusive infrastructure can be advanced when paired with policy reforms and community-level participation [12]. The Street Rehab initiative in India presents an innovative example where physical rehabilitation spaces are combined with accessible street design, improving quality of life and raising community awareness [13].

The series applies a consistent multi-phase evaluation process, incorporating SDG alignment, One Health relevance, spatial scale, and intervention type (Akarsu et al.; Abacıgil et al.). This creates a knowledge base that supports comparative insights across geographic and institutional settings [4].

Future volumes could strengthen the contribution of the series by addressing thematic gaps such as the underrepresentation of animal health [3] and by expanding the inclusion of case studies from informal settlements or cities in the Global South [4]. Including more detailed lessons on implementation barriers such as regulatory difficulties, financial limitations, and social resistance would enhance the value of the series as a learning tool for local adaptation and resilience planning [5].

A forthcoming volume focusing on elderly health is planned, which will explore how cities can design inclusive, supportive, and resilient environments for aging populations by addressing issues such as age-friendly infrastructure, social inclusion, preventive health services, and intergenerational solidarity [1]. In addition, Izmir Metropolitan Municipality intends to use the knowledge drawn from these good practice examples to guide the implementation of healthy local city solutions, aligning global insights with the city's ongoing urban transformation efforts [2].

In summary, the Good Practices series helps reframe best practices as context-sensitive and adaptable planning resources [3, 4]. It supports an evolving urban planning approach in which health, inclusivity, and sustainability are understood as shared public priorities. For cities working to translate global goals into local strategies, the series offers a practical and structured reference for designing interventions that are spatially grounded, socially responsive, and environmentally sustainable [1, 2].

Acknowledgments. This guide was prepared by the Izmir Planning Agency (IZPA) on behalf of the Turkish Healthy Cities Association.

Disclosure of Interests. The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this publication.

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