

*The role and challenges of private business incubators within the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the state of Batna*  
« *Business Valley Private Business Incubator Case Study* »

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**Abstract:**

This research paper aims to highlight the importance of the entrepreneurial ecosystem for projects, and the importance of conveying an image of the reality of this system to young entrepreneurs through private business incubators, which are an important element of this system and work to instill the spirit of entrepreneurship and spread its culture among young people, as well as highlighting the different relationships between the components of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and the most important challenges facing private business incubators within this system in the state of Batna by taking the private business incubator Business Valley as a case study.

**Keywords :** Entrepreneurial ecosystem, private business incubators, Batna State, Business Valley Private Business Incubator.

**JEL Classification:** A23, L26

**1. Introduction:**

Entrepreneurship is a multifaceted phenomenon that transcends the boundaries of specific sectors and specializations. On the one hand, it is affected by economic, social, cultural and political dimensions, and on the other hand, it is also affected by environmental and climatic factors. Start-ups as an important branch of entrepreneurship have received great attention in Algeria in recent years, especially regarding the mechanisms for supporting and financing them, and have become one of the priorities of the Algerian government, in order to contribute to driving the wheel of development and stimulating local production to create job opportunities, especially with the growing phenomenon of unemployment among Algerian youth in general, and among graduates of higher education institutions in particular. In recent years, the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Algeria has witnessed the emergence of business incubators that focus on guiding and training young Algerians who have innovative project ideas and embracing them in all fields, which has increased Algeria's focus on creating business incubators in all cities and states expected to witness entrepreneurial movement, and establishing government university business incubators, accompanied by the emergence of private business incubators in various states and in various specializations in order to activate the entrepreneurial ecosystem and make it suitable for the launch and growth of emerging institutions and innovative projects, which is the case in Batna, similar to the rest of the country's states that witnessed the emergence of a private business incubator Business Valley that plays a vital role in promoting entrepreneurship and stimulating innovation in society by creating the appropriate environment for the growth of ideas and supporting young entrepreneurs, as it is a living example of cooperation between the private sector and emerging companies. With the development of means of communication and in the midst of social networking sites, the fame of private business incubators has spread and become widely known recently, although the concept has been around for a long time and extends historically to the sixties of the last century. Study Problem: Based on the above, the problem of this study can be crystallized in the following main question:

What is the role of private business incubators in light of the entrepreneurial ecosystem for projects in Batna State? And what are the challenges they face?

The answer to this problem requires answering the following sub-questions:

- What is the entrepreneurial ecosystem?
- What are the models of the entrepreneurial ecosystem?
- What are private business incubators, their role and challenges?

**General hypothesis:** A picture of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Batna is presented through the programs and activities of the private business incubator Business Valley.

**Study objectives:** This research paper aims to highlight the role of private business incubators in the context of the project ecosystem in Batna and the most important challenges they face.

**Study methodology:** In order to cover the various aspects of the study topic, and to answer the problem raised, the descriptive approach was relied upon in order to clarify the basic concepts related to start-ups and private business incubators, and to know the role of the latter in supporting and accompanying start-up and innovative projects at the level of Batna.

**Study Divisions:** To understand this topic, this study was divided into the following axes:

First: The entrepreneurial ecosystem

Second: Private business incubators in Algeria

Third: The role of the private business incubator Business Valley in Batna and the challenges it faces in light of its entrepreneurial ecosystem

## **2. The entrepreneurial ecosystem**

The entrepreneurial ecosystem refers to the elements, individuals, organizations or institutions that are a driving factor in an individual's decision-making, and it also enhances the likelihood of this person's success if he starts to open a small entrepreneurial business project. The entrepreneurial ecosystem creates an environment that encourages entrepreneurial endeavors, because it is a complex social framework that leads to the creation of value and its fair distribution in the ecosystem.

The entrepreneurial ecosystem is unique and specific to each particular region, and the ecosystem framework can be a useful tool to point out the strengths and weaknesses of the local business environment and then guide economies to use relatively strong resources to facilitate entrepreneurial activity.

**1.2. The concept of the entrepreneurial ecosystem:** The word "ecosystem" has its roots in ecological origin and was first used by researcher Tinsley Walkel in 1935. The ecosystem includes three main components: the environment or the people involved, the place and location of the ecosystem, and finally the interaction between the parts of this ecosystem. The different definitions of the ecosystem all indicate the existence of a kind of interconnectedness and harmony between the elements of the ecosystem and they need each other to achieve success and continuity, and each plays a specific and different role. Placing the phrase ecosystem next to entrepreneurship created a new term: the entrepreneurial ecosystem. This term was used in 1993 by researcher James Moore. According to this new concept, the activities of organizations today take place across an entrepreneurial space and ecosystem. The ecosystem includes different areas such as customers, clients, suppliers, producers, shareholders, business associations, governmental and semi-governmental institutions and all stakeholders. In the entrepreneurial ecosystem, there are reciprocal and complex relationships between the members and parts of the ecosystem, and the success of this system is linked to the extent of coordination and cooperation between its parts. The entrepreneurial ecosystem emphasizes the need to create a creative climate among the actors connected to each other. In particular, the principles of entrepreneurial ecosystems focus on the role of the environment and climate in entrepreneurial activities. The entrepreneurial ecosystem refers to the elements, individuals, organizations or institutions surrounding the entrepreneur; and motivates or hinders the individual's decision to become an entrepreneur or the possibility of his success if he starts a business project and creates an environment that encourages entrepreneurial efforts. The entrepreneurial ecosystem is a physical environment in which a number of individuals and elements exist that affect the emergence and development of businesses. The entrepreneurial ecosystem does not depend on the presence of specific elements, but rather there may be many structures and elements that ultimately lead to the creation of the entrepreneurial ecosystem suitable for projects. These elements include companies, universities,

laboratories, consultants, investors, institutions...

**2.2 Models and dimensions of the entrepreneurial ecosystem:** Cohen considers seven main factors among the key components in shaping a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem, which are: the formal network and the informal network, the university and the government, professional services, support and protection services, financial services and existing talents based on the nature of many of these components. In general, each ecosystem combines the factors in the region in a specific way; therefore, the main components of the ecosystems are the same, but given that each country has its own context, testing this ecosystem in different countries is risky because each system has its own combination.

Kynawali & Foguel presented in 1994 a five-dimensional framework for the entrepreneurial environment, and these dimensions consist of an incubator environment for businesses that accept the element of risk. These dimensions include government policies and procedures, socio-economic status, business and entrepreneurship skills, financial and non-financial assistance, and the five parts of the business creation process presented in the environmental context, including: entrepreneurial opportunities, work capacity, propensity for economic activity, and the potential for economic activity and risky business creation (Kynawali & Foguel, 1994). According to the World Economic Forum 2013, the entrepreneurial ecosystem includes eight dimensions, which are available internal and external markets, human power, managerial and technical talents and entrepreneurial experiences, legal frameworks and infrastructure, entrepreneurship education and training of the workforce on quality and mastery, universities, cultural support and the industry of successful entrepreneurial models, support and advisory system, investment and financial savings (Istem, 2015). The following table shows the sum of the dimensions and components of the different models of the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

**Table No. 01: Dimensions and components of the entrepreneurial ecosystem model**

Researcher	Dimensions and components of the entrepreneurial ecosystem model
Kynawali& foguel1994	Government policies and procedures, political and economic factors, entrepreneurial and business skills, financial and non-financial assistance
Walds and Richardson 1998	Environmental characteristics, resources, market influences, and characteristics of the project owner or entrepreneur.
Isenberg2010	Markets, Politics, Human Capital, Protection, Culture, Finance
Feld 2012	Cultural support, universities, education, legal framework, infrastructure, teachers, consultants, workforce, available markets
2013 speckle	Supportive culture and networks, entrepreneurial activity, entrepreneurial talent, investment, teachers, role models, policies, university, free market, regulatory support.
Graham 2014	Policies and laws, government programmes and support, living conditions, formal institutions, informal networks and interactions, leadership and education.
Morris et al. 2017	Financial support, investment, international activities, human capital and education
Miller Wax 2017	Policies and laws, government programmes and support, capital, infrastructure, international activities, human capital, informal networks and interactions, leadership and education.

**Source: Prepared by researchers**

The comprehensive model of the entrepreneurial ecosystem: The entrepreneurial ecosystem model presented by Professor Isenberg is the result of research on the ecosystem presented by Babson College in the United States. In this model, which was formed after studying the successful and unsuccessful experiences of countries in the field of entrepreneurship, Isenberg tried to describe an environment in which the entrepreneur wants to achieve success (a suitable environment). Isenberg believes that the entrepreneur is successful when he is able to access the human, financial and professional resources he needs, and to operate in an environment where government policies support and encourage

entrepreneurs. Isenberg describes this environment as a suitable entrepreneurial ecosystem. According to him, the entrepreneurial ecosystem includes hundreds of elements that interact with each other in a complex way, and can be classified into six main areas and groups (Isenberg, 2011). Isenberg believes that the entrepreneurial ecosystem is self-preserving, because success will create success. When each of these six groups advances, they reinforce each other. The presence of factors and characteristics such as harmony, balance and coherence are what make the entrepreneurial system produce successful entrepreneurs.

#### **2.4 Characteristics of the entrepreneurial ecosystem:**

Theoretical studies on the subject of entrepreneurship development are divided into three sections. Studies on the impact of individual factors on entrepreneurial success, studies on the impact of environmental factors on entrepreneurial success and performance, and studies on the impact of individual and environmental factors on entrepreneurial development. The word "ecosystem" is considered to be part of the third group of studies on entrepreneurship development. The entrepreneurial ecosystem is defined as the factor for the continuity and sustainability of entrepreneurship in different regions. This is despite the fact that theoretically, ecosystems have not yet developed and their impact on the entrepreneurial process faces problems and challenges. Entrepreneurship plays a pivotal role in economic development, but entrepreneurial decisions are not made in an environment outside the local and regional climate of the entrepreneur's presence. The entrepreneurial ecosystem works as a group of interconnected institutions with the aim of helping entrepreneurs in the different stages of business development. In other words, in order to understand this phenomenon, in addition to the commercial activity of individuals, the basic factor must also be taken into account, and on this basis, entrepreneurship can be considered the result of the interaction and interaction of these factors with each other, which are phenomena resulting from the interaction of these individuals with the events that occur in their environment. The climate that is being talked about in this context refers to a specific geographical area that may be local, regional or national. The way these two elements (the individual and the environment) work comes within the framework of developing entrepreneurship and individuals learn about opportunities in the environments in which they live. On the other hand, this environment itself determines the type of work and the guarantor of the existing opportunities. According to Isenberg 2011, the entrepreneurial ecosystem includes six dimensions and each entrepreneurial ecosystem is special in its kind due to the multiple relationships and different reasons. The effectiveness of the ecosystem and determining the reason for the success of any entrepreneurial ecosystem is not possible due to the multiple relationships and different reasons. The effectiveness of the entrepreneurial ecosystem is also related to the strength and effectiveness of its six dimensions.

**Table 02: Main components and dimensions corresponding to each component in Isenberg's entrepreneurial ecosystem model**

Key components of the entrepreneurial ecosystem	Dimensions corresponding to each component in the entrepreneurial system model
The market	Key customers, production entrepreneurship, reference customer identification, primary market research, distribution channels, key acceptors.
	Networks, Entrepreneurial Networks, Social Legitimacy, International Cooperation of Entrepreneurs
Politics	Government, investment and support institutions, financial support and legal incentives, tax concessions, research organizations, bankruptcy laws
	Leadership, explicit support for entrepreneurship, social legitimacy of entrepreneurs, positive attitude towards entrepreneurship, and perception of entrepreneurship as a necessity
Investment	Capital, microloans, private equity, friends and family, private equity, and government capital markets

Culture	Successful models, remarkable successes, wealth creation, global fame
	Social norms, risk taking, mistakes and failure, innovation, creativity, experimentation, social status of the entrepreneur, wealth creation, ambition.
Types of protection	NGOs, non-profit entrepreneurship promotion, business plan competitions, conferences and associations
	Supporting specialties, legal, accounting, banking, specialized technical, and consultants
workforce	Workforce, skilled and unskilled, serial entrepreneurs, family
	Educational institutions, general degree (professional or university), specialized entrepreneurship education

**Source: Hadi Binipour, Prioritization of the Components of the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Province, Journal of Studies in Humanities, Iraq, 1998, p. 35.**

### 3. Private Business Incubators in Algeria

3.1 The concept of business incubators: Business incubators are defined as a public or private body or organization with a legal personality and moral independence that works to provide support to owners of small businesses and owners of innovative ideas in order to survive, grow and gain a sustainable competitive advantage, and the ability to face their challenges in the external environment in which they operate, which makes them contribute to achieving the desired economic development (Fatima Zahra, 2019)

Business incubators are a community that includes a diverse group of people who have the same passion and entrepreneurial aspirations. They provide them with shared workspaces and technologically equipped offices, in addition to support, guidance and consulting services through a specialized team of consultants with experience in the field of entrepreneurship.

3.2 A historical overview of the emergence of business incubators: The first appearance of incubators was in the United States in 1959 when the Batavia Industrial Center was established in New York State with the aim of providing shared workspaces and technological resources for emerging companies in areas such as technology, research and manufacturing.

Since then, the idea of business incubators has spread all over the world, with their number reaching approximately 7,000 according to the International Business Innovation Association in various sectors such as agriculture and sustainable development, and Algeria has taken its share of them through public and private incubators.

3.3 Private business incubators in Algeria: Business incubators did not receive much attention in Algeria before 2003, as there was no law or decree regulating the work and activities of business incubators before 2003, with the exception of Law 01/18 of 2001, which stipulates that incubators are a form of incubation, and that their role is limited to supporting service-based projects only.

Later, Algeria sought to develop legal frameworks and legislation to start and establish business incubators, and this was done by issuing Executive Decree No. (79-30) on February 25, 2003, which defines the legal nature of the role of the incubator in institutions and facilitation centers. (Sahar & others, 2020)

The Algerian legislator has identified the forms and types of business incubators and the bodies and organizations that manage them. The business incubator may be public or private, an industrial or commercial institution, a non-profit or for-profit institution, where the number of small enterprises within the incubator is determined between 20 and 50 institutions. (Sharifa, 2018).

Since 2020, it has become possible for bodies working to support and accompany emerging projects in Algeria to obtain the "Incubator" label or what is known as the "Label Incubateur" and benefit from its advantages, which are:

- Tax exemptions for two years from the date of placing the labels (LF 2021);
- Obtaining government grants;
- Benefiting from facilities in granting land and privileges.

These incubators are responsible for accompanying the hosted startups throughout the incubator period. Under this mission, the incubator is committed to the following:

- ☐ Helping startups implement prototypes.
- ☐ Accompanying hosted startups in searching for funding sources and expanding in the market.
- ☐ Assisting entrepreneurs in company establishment procedures.
- ☐ Assisting startups in preparing business plans, market studies and financing plans.
- ☐ Providing special training, including business management, legal and accounting obligations.
- ☐ Providing logistical means for entrepreneurs, such as meeting rooms, IT and office equipment and high-speed Internet connections.
- ☐ Providing headquarters for hosted startups and providing them with an equipped workspace.

3.4The role of private business incubators in supporting emerging institutions and innovative projects: Private incubators are a living example of cooperation between the private sector and startups, and play a vital role in promoting entrepreneurship and stimulating innovation in society by creating the appropriate environment for the growth of ideas and supporting young entrepreneurs.

In general, business incubators work to accelerate the successful development of emerging enterprises, through a set of business support resources and services developed or organized by the incubator management, so that the incubator provides administrative guidance, technical assistance and consulting designed for emerging enterprises, which gives incubator graduates a role in creating job opportunities and strengthening the local and national economy (Louis & and Others, 2002).

3.5The most important private business incubators supporting emerging enterprises in Algeria: Algeria has witnessed in recent years a development in the field of entrepreneurship, especially in the movement to establish business incubators as a pillar for the transition to a start-up economy, as 117 public (university) incubators have been established to date, and more than 50 private business incubators, and we mention in the following table some of the private business incubators and accelerators in Algeria.

**Table No 03: The most important private business incubators and accelerators in Algeria**

Introducing it	Incubator name
It is a business incubator and accelerator founded in 2015, based in Algiers, working to bring startups closer and integrate them into the Algerian entrepreneurial ecosystem, supporting entrepreneurs through consulting and providing the entrepreneurial tools necessary to succeed in the Algerian market.	Sylabs
Based in Algiers, it helps innovative projects and start-ups by providing support, advice and monitoring the progress of projects (technically/financially/logistically and administratively), and aims to spread the culture of modern entrepreneurship and the business world through conferences and events.	INCUBME
Based in Mohammedia, Algeria, it provides consulting and advisory services, as well as business training for Algerian companies. Its services include project acceleration, support, guidance, and holding events and conferences on entrepreneurship.	BCOS
Founded in 2016, it aims to promote social entrepreneurship in Algeria, as well as to support and bring together the actors in the entrepreneurship ecosystem.	Algerian Center for Social Entrepreneurship
Located in Belouizdad-Algeria, it is an incubator and accelerator that helps develop innovation and entrepreneurship in Algeria, by accelerating the growth of startups using different tools such as: Think Thank and Fablabs.	INSTITUT HABA
A private business incubator in Tebessa, with an added	INNOEST



value in the field of partnership (PPP), working to develop local start-ups, accompany them and direct them towards important sectors in the region.	COMPANY
This incubator was founded in 2016 with the aim of promoting social entrepreneurship in Algeria and supporting entrepreneurs in creating and developing their projects.	ALGERIAN CENTER FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP/ ACSE

Source : <https://www.startup.dz/trouver-un-incubateur/> consulté le 22/09/2024

The role of the private business incubator Business Valley in Batna and the challenges it faces in light of its entrepreneurial ecosystem

**Private Business Incubator Business Valley:** The Business Valley Incubator was established in 2021 in Batna, and has a work team consisting of: the incubator director, a secretariat and a diverse staff of experts and trainers. The strategic vision of the Business Valley incubator lies primarily in structuring and promoting the field of entrepreneurship and innovation locally, as well as creating a generation of entrepreneurs capable of providing added value to the local and national economy.

**Services and activities of the Private Business Incubator Business Valley:** Since its establishment, the Business Valley incubator began providing various services in line with the needs and demands of young entrepreneurs in Batna, and these services were: incubation, localization, training, accompaniment, providing consultations, and organizing economic events. It has carried out several activities, the most important outcomes of which during the last two years were:

Accompanying 12 institutions to obtain the “Label STARTUP” start-up label in the fields: EDUCTECH, HEALTH TECH, HR TECH, E-COMMERCE, SAAS;

Accompanying 20 project ideas to obtain the “Label PROJET INNOVANT” innovative project label for a group of young innovators, students, university professors;

Accompanying 63 self-employed “Freelancers” in the following fields: E-COMMERCE, PROGRAMMING, DIGITAL MARKETING, GRAPHIC DESIGN, HAND MADE;

Organizing annual events such as: Batna UP Festival 2023, Batna National Salon for Entrepreneurship and Technology Batna Expo in 2024, which had a significant impact as:

- It was attended by 2,000 visitors from 20 states of the country;
- 100 institutions participated in it;
- 30 startups were presented in it;
- 10 success stories were narrated in it;
- 15 Talks sessions were held;
- The salon achieved more than 18,000 followers on the social media pages of the Business Valley incubator.
- Working on networking and establishing relationships between the various actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem by concluding several partnerships with institutions from different sectors as shown in the following figure:

**Figure 01: Some of the institutions that have partnered with the incubator Business Valley**



**Source: Business Valley Incubator**

4.3 Challenges facing the private business incubator Business Valley in the context of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Batna: Before addressing the challenges facing the private business

incubator Business Valley, it is necessary to give a simple and general diagnosis of the entrepreneurial ecosystem at the level of Batna.

4.3.1 Diagnosis of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Batna: In this section, we tried to project the elements of the entrepreneurial ecosystem according to Isenberg onto Batna and concluded that these elements are characterized by:

□ Market: It is difficult to conduct primary market research and identify the reference customer and distribution channels in Batna due to the lack of reliable information and scarcity of official sources, as well as the weakness of the entrepreneurial network and the absence of cooperation between local entrepreneurs.

□ Politics: There is no doubt that the Algerian government considers entrepreneurship a necessity, and is making efforts to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem at the level of all states, by creating investment and support institutions, providing financial support and legal incentives, tax privileges, and enacting laws that support the existence and development of emerging institutions. However, local administrations remain far from actually supporting entrepreneurs and taking a positive stance towards entrepreneurship and not removing obstacles that stand in the way of entrepreneurs, such as facilitating electronic payment and facilitating access to resources and information...

□ Culture: In recent years, some successful local models of entrepreneurs have begun to appear, which have built local fame and are considered an example of bearing mistakes, failures and risks in order to achieve their ambitions and change their social status, especially among young people. However, social norms remain stronger in terms of the culture of searching for a job rather than seeking to create jobs, which means that the culture of entrepreneurship is still weak in the state of Batna compared to some other states across the country. □ Investment: At the level of Batna province, there is a significant shortage of capital directed to investment in start-ups and innovative projects, so entrepreneurs resort to their own money or friends and family... while waiting for the activation of some government financing mechanisms such as the NESDA agency.

□ Types of protection: Some associations and advisory councils that are active at the level of civil society support entrepreneurship in general and social entrepreneurship in Batna province, and organize competitions, conferences and training camps. However, these initiatives remain insufficient compared to the number of young people looking for such opportunities to enhance their capabilities in the field of entrepreneurship. Especially in light of the lack of support and legal, accounting, specialized technical, and specialized consultants.

4.3.2 Challenges facing the Business Valley incubator in light of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Batna province: Through its activity in Batna province and through interaction with the various components of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, the Business Valley incubator faces many challenges, the most important of which are:

-Limited entrepreneurial culture among most actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem at the level of Batna province;

-Scarcity of financial sponsorship sources for the incubator's annual events and lack of sponsorship culture among businessmen at the state level;

-Lack of entrepreneurial skills among the youth of the region and the lack of easy access to ways to enhance them...

## 5. Conclusion:

The appropriate entrepreneurial ecosystem is a set of systems, networks, institutions and interactive relationships that define, shape, direct and facilitate the development of emerging institutions and innovative projects that rely heavily in their beginnings on accompaniment and incubation through what are called business incubators, whether public or private.

At the level of Batna province, the private business incubator Business Valley is active and is trying to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem and make it more suitable for entrepreneurs at the state level, so it exerts a lot of efforts and leads many initiatives to be at the level of their aspirations. Despite the important role played by this private incubator compared to the large number of young people at the state level and the great demand for its services and activities... it in itself faces challenges in working with some elements of the local entrepreneurial ecosystem in Batna province. This is due to the lack of coordination and interaction and the lack of communication between these components in most cases,



as well as the material and human capabilities placed at the disposal of this private incubator. Therefore, we believe that in order for the Business Valley incubator to overcome these challenges and work more effectively and contribute to pushing the entrepreneurial ecosystem towards improvement and development, it is necessary to work on the following recommendations at the state level:

Establishing a state cell with an advisory nature, whose members consist of actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the state, whose role is to submit proposals and periodic reports to local decision-makers on developing the ecosystem for entrepreneurial institutions and projects.

Intensifying agreements and partnerships between actors in the entrepreneurial ecosystem at the state level.

Creating a unified card for innovative projects and start-ups at the level of all actors in the ecosystem, via a link or a unified registration portal specific to the state.

Facilitating access by entrepreneurial project owners and start-ups to economic data used in studying the feasibility of their projects and also conducting their market research.

Spreading the culture of entrepreneurship among young people in the state by involving the local press "media", with articles, topics and specialized sections, by publishing positive local entrepreneurial stories, and various innovative projects in the state on a regular basis.

Facilitating access to information and opening reliable sources in order to facilitate market research by involving administrative institutions in activating the entrepreneurial ecosystem and relying on digitization in this;

Allocating a local investment fund to support and finance innovative projects and start-ups with economic efficiency;

Working to provide spaces for training trainers and specialists in field entrepreneurship and the reality of the Algerian market; - Raising awareness among public and private economic companies and informing them of the benefits of open innovation and the importance of investing in digital solutions....

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