

CHAPTER 17

Urban Slum Rehabilitation: A Critical Analysis of their Impacts on Urban Sustainability and Human Rights with Policy Recommendation

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ABSTRACT

Rapid urbanisation in India has accelerated the growth of informal settlements, making urban slum rehabilitation essential for achieving sustainable and inclusive urban development. This study critically analyses the environmental, social, economic, legal, and human rights dimensions of slum rehabilitation, focusing on Mumbai's Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP) as a representative case. It examines major policies such as the Maharashtra Slum Areas (Improvement, Clearance and Redevelopment) Act, 1971, Development Control Regulation (DCR) 33(10), and the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) to identify challenges including land tenure disputes, policy overlaps, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and forced displacement. Employing a mixed methodological approach—combining policy analysis, stakeholder perspectives, and field observations—the research finds that while rehabilitation initiatives improve physical infrastructure and tenure security, they often lead to livelihood loss, social fragmentation, and environmental degradation. Dharavi's informal economy, valued between ₹5,000–₹7,000 crore annually, represents a resilient urban ecosystem at risk of destabilisation through top-down redevelopment. The study concludes that India's existing model remains infrastructure-centric and insufficiently participatory. It advocates a shift toward inclusive, community-driven, and environmentally resilient rehabilitation frameworks that balance physical redevelopment with social justice and long-term sustainability.

Keywords: Urban slum rehabilitation, Dharavi redevelopment project, Sustainable development, Community participation.

1.0 Introduction

Economic growth and rural-urban migration have led to rapid urbanisation in India, exceeding the available supply of affordable, serviced housing to millions of people who are

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left in slums with insecure tenure, congestion, poor hygiene and shabby housing. Sawhney (2013) further onslaughts that slums are also a consequence in failures of land markets, housing policy, and governance; the Census of India (2001) identified 42.6 million slum inhabitants (approximately 15 percent of urban population) in metros with high population density, particularly Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Chennai.

Despite the introduction of programmes such as Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums Programme (1972-73), National Slum Development Programme (1996), Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (2005), Rajiv Awas Yojana (2009-10) and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (2015), slum expansion has persisted because of poor execution, financial constraints and inter-agency coordination (Sawhney, 2013).

1.1 Dharavi: A form of informal urban economy

Dharavi, Mumbai, Maharashtra is a large centre of the informal urban economy, covering an area of approximately 2.1 square kilometres and accommodating 700000 to approximately 1 million inhabitants, giving it a population density of over 350 persons per hectare. It has approximately 60,000 to 80,000 predominantly one- to three-storey buildings.

In contrast to other slums which are primarily residential, Dharavi is an extremely efficient economic hub with an estimated turnover of 1500-1700 crore per year. Its industries comprise leather, textiles, food processing, recycling, pottery, printing, embroidery, and other minor production, approximately 90 percent of its efforts are in the informal sector, which has earned it the title of special economic zone of the poor.

Dharavi is also a place where migrants of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and others have jobs, learn skills, and create micro-businesses, and lower crime rates than several well to do places in Mumbai are noted.

- **Dharavi: A Social and Economic Ecosystem:** Dharavi is a neighbourhood that maintains the close connection of housing, employment as well as social life and therefore it is a significant place to study informal urban economies. This can be seen in the case of Mr. Asif, a leather entrepreneur, since having migrated with Bihar in 1988, at the age of 12 years, he received training as an apprentice after which he opened his own leather unit in Dharavi and he hires mostly Bihar migrants as well as creates delivery goods to large distributors. Dharavi has played the livelihood creation and social mobility roles, as one of his workers Mohammad Wazair earns approximately ₹6,000 per month sending half the money home to ensure his children go to school despite being illiterate himself.

On the same note, Mohammed Mustaqueem who got to Dharavi at the age of 13 and at first slept in the alleyways established a garment business that has 12 outlets and about 300 workers and earned an annual turnover in the tune of USD 2.5 million with his Dharavi land worth USD 20 million.

- **Indian Slum Rehabilitation Policies:** The policy of slum rehabilitation in India has also changed the emphasis of demolition into in-situ upgrading and reorders with the community integration. Social rejection and the challenge of resettlement of people caused the failure of the Slum Clearance Programme under the Second Five-Year Plan. This was succeeded by the Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums Programme (197273), which also offered basic services, but failed to take any action on the quality of housing or security of tenure, and the National Slum Development Programme (1996) that provided services to combine housing and infrastructure but had little effect due to under-utilised funds and poor implementation.

Restructuring continued in the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (2005) in its Basic Services to the Urban Poor sub-program, and then in-situ renovation under the Rajiv Awas Yojana (200910) and inclusive urban housing under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) since 2015. Nevertheless, Sawhney (2013) points out that they have been limited to a high level of cost-sharing, institutional fragmentation, corruption, and poor political will.

- **Slum Rehabilitation Easy Model of Mumbai:** Slum rehabilitation authority (SRA) is a state organization that was formed in Maharashtra in 1995 to carry out the working of slum redevelopment by the association of the people and the corporation. According to this model, the developers are accorded development rights and a large Floor Space Index (FSI) in exchange to construct free rehabilitation houses to the eligible slum dwellers.

The eligibility requirement is the evidence of residence prior to a definite cut-off date, initially 1995 and subsequently 2000. Homes which fail to meet this obligation are either moved to the peripheral settlements or left out of the scheme.

Anand and Rademacher (2011) note that this system has created politics of compensation, in which slum dwellers have been negotiating with politics and businesspeople to obtain eligibility. This has skewed power to the benefit of the private developers with most of them creating high-density and ill-conceived rehabilitation housing that does not capture local livelihoods, as well as social organisation.

2.0 Literature Review

Research indicates that slum rehabilitation in Indian cities has enhanced housing, incomes, employment, and school enrolment though these benefits are usually neutralised by informal employment, migrant exclusion and low-cost housing. Slum Rehabilitation Housing has provided residents with legal tenure and improved buildings in Mumbai, but is overcrowded, poorly ventilated, lacking common facilities and weakened social networks which leads to a rebound effect with some returning to informal settlements.

As the Philippines and Thailand have shown, community-based and tenure-based models are more likely to result in socially stable and economically viable communities compared to project-based approaches. In general, the lack of connection between physical redevelopment and socio-economic sustainability is evident in the literature in which policies concentrate on legalising land and buildings but omit livelihoods, local economies, and social networks, it is necessary to consider Dharavi as a socio-economics system instead of only a housing issue.

General Slum Rehabilitation Policies:

- Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) Scheme-Mumbai
 - Regulated under DCPR 2034, Regulation 33(10)
 - It provides free 300 sq. ft. housing to eligible slum dwellers.
 - High incentive FSI (up to 4.0) makes projects viable for developers.
 - Utilizes Slum TDR and promotes cluster redevelopment.
- PMAY – In-Situ Slum Redevelopment (ISSR)
 - A scheme under PMAY-U 2015
 - It is a scheme of slum redevelopment at an identical spot.
 - Central subsidy of ₹1 lakh for each EWS unit.
 - Provides extra FSI and financial assistance to motivate private developers.
- PMAY – Urban: Affordable Housing in Partnership (AHP)
 - It is to be implemented through State Governments and Urban Local Bodies.
 - It will target EWS and LIG housing.
 - A central and state subsidy of up to ₹3 lakh per unit.
 - Generally linked to slum rehab within mixed housing projects.
- Maharashtra State Slum Improvement Programme
 - It is a project under the Mumbai Sewage Improvement Board and the BMC.
 - It is for basic infrastructure improvements within slums.
 - It contains toilets, drainage, water, roads, and lighting.
 - No redevelopment or housing construction.
- MHADA Slum Redevelopment Schemes
 - Under Development Control and Promotion Regulations (DCPR) 33(5)
 - For MHADA chawls and notified slums
 - MHADA gives 300-400 Sq. Ft. free housing units
 - MHADA acts as direct developer or allocator
- Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP)
 - Total project cost of ₹96,000 crore
 - ₹25,000 crore to be spent on rehabilitation.
 - Free 350 sq. ft. housing on qualifying families.

- Cut-off year: pre-2000 residency
- Constructing high-rise buildings to 30 storeys.
- Five industry clusters will be developed.
- Multisided coordination of government agencies and individual developers.

3.0 Case Studies

3.1 An analysis of the impact of slum upgrading programs on urban poverty reduction

Author: Dr. Durba Dutta

Year: 2024 in Library Progress International (Vol. 44 No. 3, Jul-Dec 2024)

Location: Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore

Main Findings:

- Monthly household income increased by 50-60%
- Employment: Rise in employment by 20-25%
- Basic Services: Notable gains in access to clean water, sanitation and electricity.
- Housing: Quality improved by 30-35%
- Health: Waterborne disease incidence declined significantly
- Education: Primary education completion among children increased by 15-20%.
- Community Engagement: Greater community participation, decision-making involvement and social cohesion.

3.2 Socio-physical liveability through socio-spatiality in low-income resettlement- a case of slum rehabilitation housing in Mumbai, India

Author: Ahana Sarkar and Ronita Bardhan

Year: 2020 in the Journal Cities (Elsevier)

Location: Mumbai

Main Findings:

- SRH in Mumbai, while successful in providing legal tenure and basic infrastructure, suffers from poor socio-physical liveability, resulting in a “rebound phenomenon”- where residents abandon SRH and return to informal settlements.
- Key Problems Identified in SRH:
 - Lack of social spaces and community interaction.
 - Overcrowded, poorly ventilated buildings.
 - Poorly designed interior layouts
- Comparison with Slums and Chawls: Slums and chawls offer better social interaction and localized economic opportunities despite physical deficiencies. SRH, in contrast have better construction but create social isolation.

- SRHs exhibited lowest air ventilation (0.5-0.98 m/s) compared to chawls. Poorly spaced towers reduce air flow and thermal comfort.

3.3 Ensuring shelter for all: analysing India's legal framework and policies on housing for all

Author: Shahid Rizwan Baig & Lubna Ghulam Sarwar

Year: 2024 in Global Legal Studies Review (GLSR)

Location: India

Main Findings:

- Implementation Gaps: execution at local and state levels is inconsistent and often fragmented
- High land costs, rigid land-use policies, and low floor space index (FSI) limits restrict affordable housing in cities.
- Regulatory Barriers
- Many informal settlements remain outside the legal purview, limiting their eligibility for government schemes
- Financial requirements and land acquisition delays often exclude the poorest households, who remain in substandard conditions.

3.4 Communities' environment improvement network: Strategy and process toward sustainable urban poor housing development

Author: Prayong Posriprasert and Nattawut Usavagovitwong

Year: 2006 in the Journal of Architectural/Planning Research and Studies (JARS), Volume 4.

Location: Thailand

Main Findings:

- The paper centres on the Bang Bua Canal community in Bangkok, which was illegally settled along public canal land, causing environmental degradation.
- Government Initiative – Baan Mankong Program
- Community Empowerment through Networks
- Inclusive Participation Strategy
- Integrated Environmental Goals
- Institutional Collaboration

3.5 Lessons from CODI on coproduction

Author: Somsook Boonyabancha and Thomas Kerr

Year: 2018 in Environment & Urbanization, Volume 30, Issue 2

Location: Thailand

Main Findings:

- Community-Led Development
- Secure Tenure and Infrastructure
- Scalability and Replication
- Institutional Innovation
- Broader Urban Transformation

3.6 An assessment of the community mortgage program implementation strategy

Author: Marife M. Ballesteros, Tatum P. Ramos, and Jasmine E. Magtibay

Year: 2017 in Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS)

Location: Philippines

Main Findings:

- The Community Mortgage Program (CMP) is a government housing finance scheme that allows organized informal settler families (ISFs) in the Philippines to access loans for land purchase, site development, and housing improvement
- Community Empowerment
- Program Extensions:
 - Localized CMP (LCMP)
 - High-Density Housing Program (HDHP)
- CMP is demand-driven, relying heavily on mobilizers and community initiative.
- Evidence of increased housing investment and community organization.

4.0 Research Methodology

4.1 Research approach

This research takes case-study based approach concerning the issue of slum rehabilitation, with specific reference to Dharavi, Mumbai, because of its unique scale, density, economic productivity, and present status under the Development Plan. The case in point aims to investigate how slum rehabilitation relates to urban sustainability and human rights concerning livelihood, infrastructure, governance, and displacement.

The methodology combines doctrinal research with non-doctrinal or empirical research. It is an appropriate approach to capturing the policy-legal framework within which the development of slums takes place and the empirical ground socio-economic realities on which the residents live.

4.2 Doctrinal research method

The doctrinal part depends on a systematized study of the respective legal frameworks, policies, judicial decisions, and redevelopment schemes concerning the data collected in this regard.

Judicial Decisions on Human Rights:

- *Olga Tellis & Ors. vs. Bombay Municipal Corporation* 1985, Supreme Court
- Facts: In 1981, the BMC started the process of evicting pavement dwellers from Mumbai. Petitioners challenged this under Articles 19, 21, and 14 of the Constitution.
- Legal Issue: Does Article 21 (right to life) also include the right to livelihood, and does eviction without rehabilitation violate that right?

Judicial Decisions on Dharavi Slum Redevelopment Projects:

- *Seclink vs Maharashtra Government: Challenge to Dharavi Redevelopment Contract* 2023, Bombay High Court
Significance: Dispelled doubt regarding state authority over procurement processes and discretion in tendering for significant slum redevelopment projects.
- *Sagar Devre PIL Challenging Use of Salt-Pan Land for Dharavi PAP Housing* 2025, Bombay High Court
Significance: This bolstered environmental and land policy changes as they allowed slum rehabilitation on previously restricted land categories.
- *NGO PIL on Mahim Nature Park Inclusion in Dharavi Redevelopment* 2024, Bombay High Court
Significance: Reinforced the sanctity of reserved forest areas in city planning; aligned development plans are necessary.
- *Suo Moto PIL for Review of Maharashtra Slum Areas Act, 1971*
Ongoing, Bombay High Court
Significance: An institutional commitment to structural reform of slum policy and legal frameworks.
- *NAGAR vs. Citispace PIL regarding Public Open Space for Slum Rehab Grounds*
Ongoing, Bombay High Court
Significance: A perception of balance between housing needs and preservation of urban open space.

International Case Studies:

- *Favela-Bairro (Rio de Janeiro)*: Infrastructure and integration of the public spaces, moderate involvement, and low livelihood protection.
- *Medellin (Colombia, PUI/Metro cable)*: Well-developed combined infrastructure and mobility and social programs, which enhance the safety and accessibility of the city.

- *Kibera (Kenya, KENSUP Pilot)*: Temporary displacement had a detrimental effect on livelihoods, which validates the need to focus on the continuity of livelihoods and the in-situ solution.
- *Baan Mankong (Thailand)*: Community based and extremely participatory finance and tenure solutions, great scaling and sustainability performance.
- *Shek Kip Mei (Hong Kong)*: Government-led mass rehousing, high in scale, but not participatory or livelihood-sensitive.

The approach allowed the study to define the policy purpose and legal requirements of the slum rehabilitation, which was subsequently evaluated in accordance with the empirical facts.

4.3 Non-doctrinal (empirical) research method

The non-doctrinal study is based purely on the Primary data gathered in Dharavi which is recorded.

5.0 Data Analysis

5.1 Data collection methods

- *Field observations*: Of the typological houses, infrastructure status and service provision.
- *Structured Questionnaire Survey*: analysing primary data collected from 50 residents of Dharavi, Mumbai
- *Cases and unofficial conversations*: With residents, workers, and entrepreneurs.
- *Industrial observation*: Of economic activities in the sector, e.g. leather, garments, pottery, recycling, and food processing.
- *Photographic documentation*: Concentrated on Water, sanitation, drainage, waste, and electricity system
- *The empirical methodology focused on capturing*:
 - Working and living conditions in Dharavi.
 - How informal economic networks are operated.
 - The area is characterized by inadequate infrastructure and services.
 - Expected effects of redevelopment and relocation.

5.2 Physical and demographic Dharavi characteristics

Dharavi is the largest slum in the world, comprising 2.1 sq. km and with a population density of around 850,000 people (midpoint estimate). The settlement is made up of 60,000-80,000 low rise buildings where one to three storeys are common, which leads to terribly high household occupancy levels.

5.3 Socio-demographic characteristic of the respondents

The sample of the survey is a relatively steady and economically active group.

- Age: The majority of the respondents fall within the 18-45 age group (64 percent) which depicts a majority working-age group.
- Gender: 68% of the respondents are male and 30% are female demonstrating the genderization of informal employment.
- Migration & Tenure: 78 Percent of the residents are migrants to other Indian states with 72 Percent staying in Dharavi over 10 years.
- Household Size: The average household size is of about five persons, which is a strong indication of high residential density.

Interpretation: The statistics do not support the view of the slums as temporary housing. The long-term home and stable families imply that Dharavi is a permanent urban neighbourhood with social and economic capital accrued over time.

5.4 Housing conditions and access to infrastructure

Dharavi housing does not only have a shelter purpose but also an economical role. 66% of the respondents use their home as a residential and a livelihood place.

Services accessibility (average rating on 5-point scale):

- Water supply: 2.3
- Sanitation: 2.1
- Drainage: 1.9
- Electricity: 3.0
- Solid waste management: 2.0

Most of what is being reported is overcrowding (84%), bad ventilation (72%), monsoon flooding (68%), and health hazards (56%).

Interpretation: Although the physical housing conditions are inadequate, the built form is in favour of economic activity. The problem of redevelopment which only targets vertical housing will only help eradicate the productive live-work areas instead of overcoming the fundamental problems in the infrastructure.

5.5 Livelihood structures and informal economy

The primary piece of information brings out the importance of Dharavi as an important informal economic region.

- Character of work: 58% conduct home based business and 32% employee more workers.
- Income levels: 44% earn ₹10,000 - ₹20,000 per month and 36% earn ₹20,000 - ₹40,000 per month

- Livelihood dependency: 74% declare that they are strongly dependent upon staying in Dharavi.
- Regarding relocation: 46% expect total loss of livelihood and 38% anticipate partial income decline.

Interpretation: These results indicate that the economic risks of relocation-based rehabilitation are high. Dislocation is not only a threat to household earnings, but also to production systems that are interrelated and sub-optimizing urban economic viability.

The data gathered is analysed to determine that Dharavi is a big informal economic zone commonly referred as self created special economic zone of the poor.

The major economic indicators are:

- Turnover of informal economy of Rs. 5,000-7,000 crore per annum.
- Some 12000 MSMEs and 15000 micro-industrial units.
- The creation of jobs to approximately 250,000 individuals.
- Donation of almost USD 1 billion each year.

Major Sectors Identified:

- Leather production (more than 5,000 units)
- Clothing manufacturing (500 big factories and 3,000 smaller ones)
- Pottery (especially the Kumbharwada)
- Snack manufacturing and food processing.
- Recycling (approximately 722 plants)
- Printing, embroidery, jewellery, sutures and micro-services.

5.6 Awareness and participation in redevelopment processes

The magnitude of the differences (regarding these two variables) in the awareness and participation in the redevelopment processes was determined. The level of knowledge about the Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP) is rather high, but the attendance is low. 82 percent of the respondents know of the DRP. In the first group there is word of mouth (54%), and in the second one there is media (28%). The percentage of having been consulted was only 18% and only 6% found such consultations meaningful. Only one out of twelve feels that their concerns are being addressed.

Interpretation: The top-down approach is largely dominant in the redevelopment process. Lack of community involvement amplifies the mistrust and resistance that may negatively influence the project timeline, financial viability and social sustainability.

5.7 Tenure security and eligibility issues

Insecurity of tenure became a significant issue amongst the respondents. Only 48% have documentary evidence of residence before the cut-off year 2000. 46% of them are not

sure whether they will get rehab housing. 62% have the fear of disqualification because of gaps in documentation.

Interpretation: Strict eligibility rules cause insecurity and panic, which brings up serious human rights concern. Spatial exclusionary patterns are dangerous in that they tend to reverse the benefits of rehabilitation towards informal re-slumming and social strife.

5.8 Rehabilitation outcomes perceptions

People are aware of the possible advantages and disadvantages of redevelopment.

- Expected benefits:
 - Better housing: 76%
 - Improved infrastructure: 68%
 - Legal tenure security: 54%
- The negative effects that are predicted include:
 - Loss of livelihood: 72%
 - Social fragmentation: 64%
 - Increased cost of living: 58%
 - Cultural loss: 46%
 - People wanting in-situ, low rise or high-density redevelopment: 16%
 - People supporting high-rise tower-based housing: 18%.

Interpretation: The statistics show conditional approval of redevelopment. The residents endorse the upgrading but are very much against models that interfere with the livelihoods and community networks.

5.9 Synthesis of primary data findings

The primary data Dharavi as an inseparable socio-economic ecosystem wherein housing, livelihoods and social networks cannot be distinguished. Displacement-based, high-rise redevelopment models stand the danger of causing economic dislocation, social capital, erosion and human rights abuses.

5.10 Conclusion of primary data analysis results

The survey of 50 Dharavi residents demonstrates that there is a sharp difference between current slum rehabilitation strategies and real-world situations. Although redevelopment provides benefits of better housing and infrastructure, sustainability hinges on the ability to protect livelihoods and provide tenure security as well as allowing meaningful community involvement. The most appropriate way in terms of sustainable and equitable urban development involves in-situ, participatory, and livelihood-sensitive rehabilitation that is well-supported by the primary data.

6.0 Findings

- *Dharavi Informal Urban Economy of High Value:* The study confirms that Dharavi is not only a residential slum but a fully incorporated economic ecosystem where people living in the area earn livelihoods to the tune of 250,000. Central to its operation are informal production, migrant labour networks and apprenticeship systems.
- *Infrastructure Shortcomings undermine Health and Productivity:* Dharavi, although known to produce a large economic output, has a history of infrastructure breakdown in water supply, sanitation, wastes, drainage, as well as electricity. The following deficits have a direct impact:
 - Public health outcomes
 - Worker productivity
 - In monsoons and power failures business continuity.
- *Livelihood Risks Livelihood risks as a result of Redevelopment:* The redevelopment proposed poses a threat to:
 - Home- work integration that is vital to MSMEs.
 - Women-led micro-enterprises
 - Cultural clusters like ceramic centers and recycling centers.

The risk of relocation is the disintegration of the supply chains, making the small businesses less competitive.

- *Exclusion concerns:* The cut-off eligibility includes a high number of residents who are not been covered causing concerns with regards to:
 - Forcible transfer without rehabilitation.
 - Loss of livelihood
 - Breach of principles that were laid down Olga Tellis v. BMC

The results show that there is a difference between laws and the real-life implementation.

- *Disconnect between Redevelopment Vision and Ground Reality:* Although the DRP focuses on the modernization, sustainability and the improvement of the infrastructure, field information identifies:
 - Poor involvement of society.
 - The doubt about compensation pay and relocation.
 - The apprehension of higher cost of living and operation after redevelopment.

7.0 Conclusion

The paper proves that, in its existing form, the concept of slum rehabilitation in-urban areas gives much priority to housing provision, despite the fact that it disregards or overlooks

other important concepts such as security of livelihood, social capital, and environmental conservation. Therefore, triggered by this reality, physical, economic, and social displacement continues to worsen because of ineffective participatory processes, insufficient legal protection, and lack of monitoring after rehabilitation. The implications of this study highlight that rehabilitation of slums in urban areas essentially remains in the domain of governance rather than remaining in the technical domain of housing issues only. People-oriented in-situ redevelopment also requires community participation and accountability in order to promote sustainable social and economic development of such areas.

A rights-based approach with a special emphasis on the implementation dimension is recommended. Such an approach will secure the alignment of Slum Rehabilitation with human rights instruments, livelihood security, and urban sustainability. Specifically, it would promote in-situ and staggered approaches to slum redevelopment in ways where the displacement impact is kept to the barest minimum while the locus upon which the right to housing is entitled to remain uninjured. It would rest upon national and international best practices. It would ensure institutional arrangements wherein live-work approaches to urban sustainability would be secured in ways where the social and economic ecosystems would be provided due support.

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