



Social Innovation Initiatives in Agro-Food Systems of Tropical and Moderate Regions

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Introduction

- In the past decade, increasingly studies on social innovation in agro-food sector became available.
- Social Innovation (SI)** can be defined as innovation that are generated through the collaboration of societal actors, that function through a change in social relationships or structures and that serve social needs (Ayob et al 2016, Edwards-Schachter & Wallace 2017, van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016)
- The majority of publications on social innovation relate to initiatives in countries with a moderate climate. Out of 139 downloaded publications that establish a connection between SI and any dimension of the agro-food system, only 43 have a study location in a tropical country
- It is hypothesized that the needs for SI differ under tropical and moderate conditions and that therefore also the different new relationships are established, and outcomes achieved

Methods

Data Collection: 1) Search of Scopus, Web of Science and EBSCO, 2) Download 139 studies, 3) Full text screening against the following inclusion criteria:

- Published in English language in a peer-reviewed journal (or book)
 - Situated in context of food production (agriculture/farming), processing, marketing or consumption (e.g., studies on forestry, natural resource management, urban gardening excluded)
 - Contains conceptualisation of social innovation and applies conceptualisation in analysis
- 4) Identification of 38 peer-reviewed articles and two book chapters (n=40 studies) for a systematic review

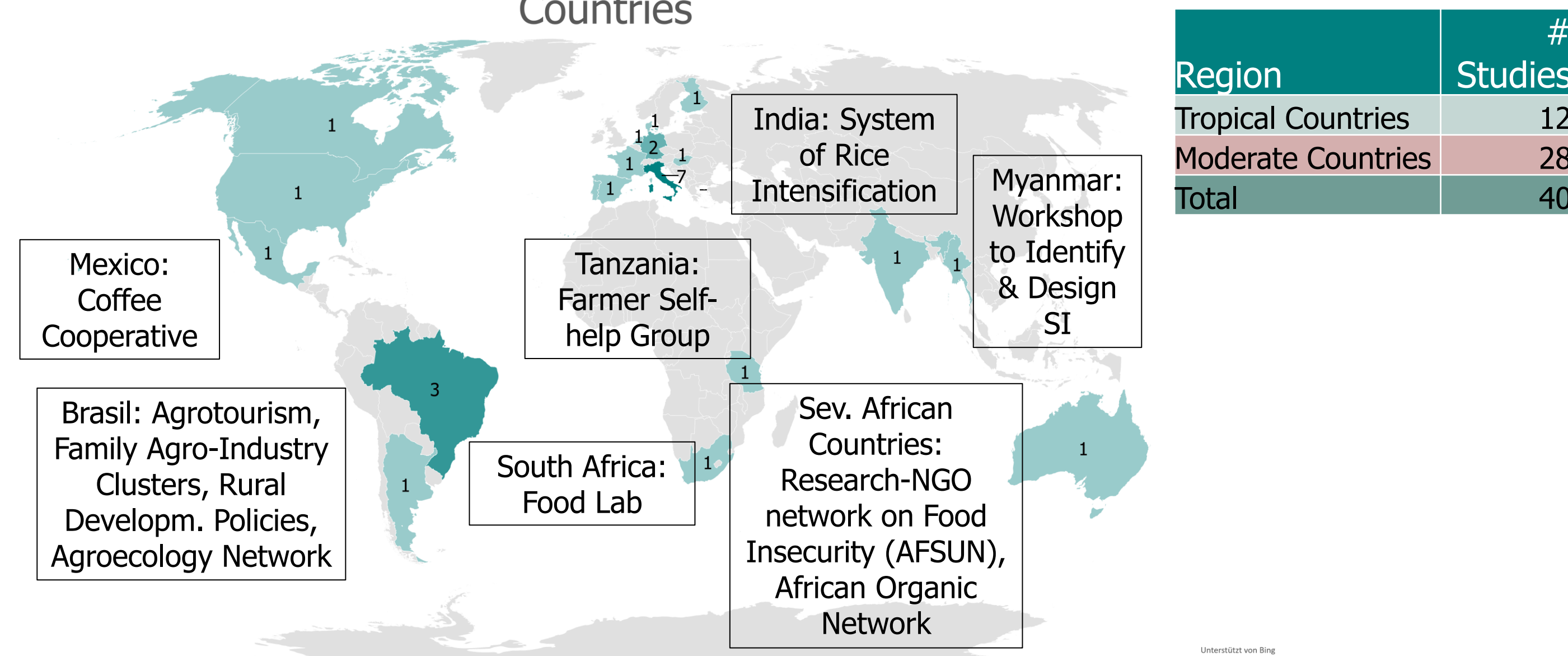
Data analysis: Systematic review conducted in two ways:

- Quantitative analysis of bibliographic and directly quantifiable information (e.g., journal, location of study), as well as of indirectly quantifiable information (e.g., categories for type of social need or type of intervention were built and assigned) using Excel
- Qualitative content analysis using MAXQDA 2020

Results

Geographical distribution of Social Innovation studies

Number of Studies by Study Location and SI Initiatives in Tropical Countries



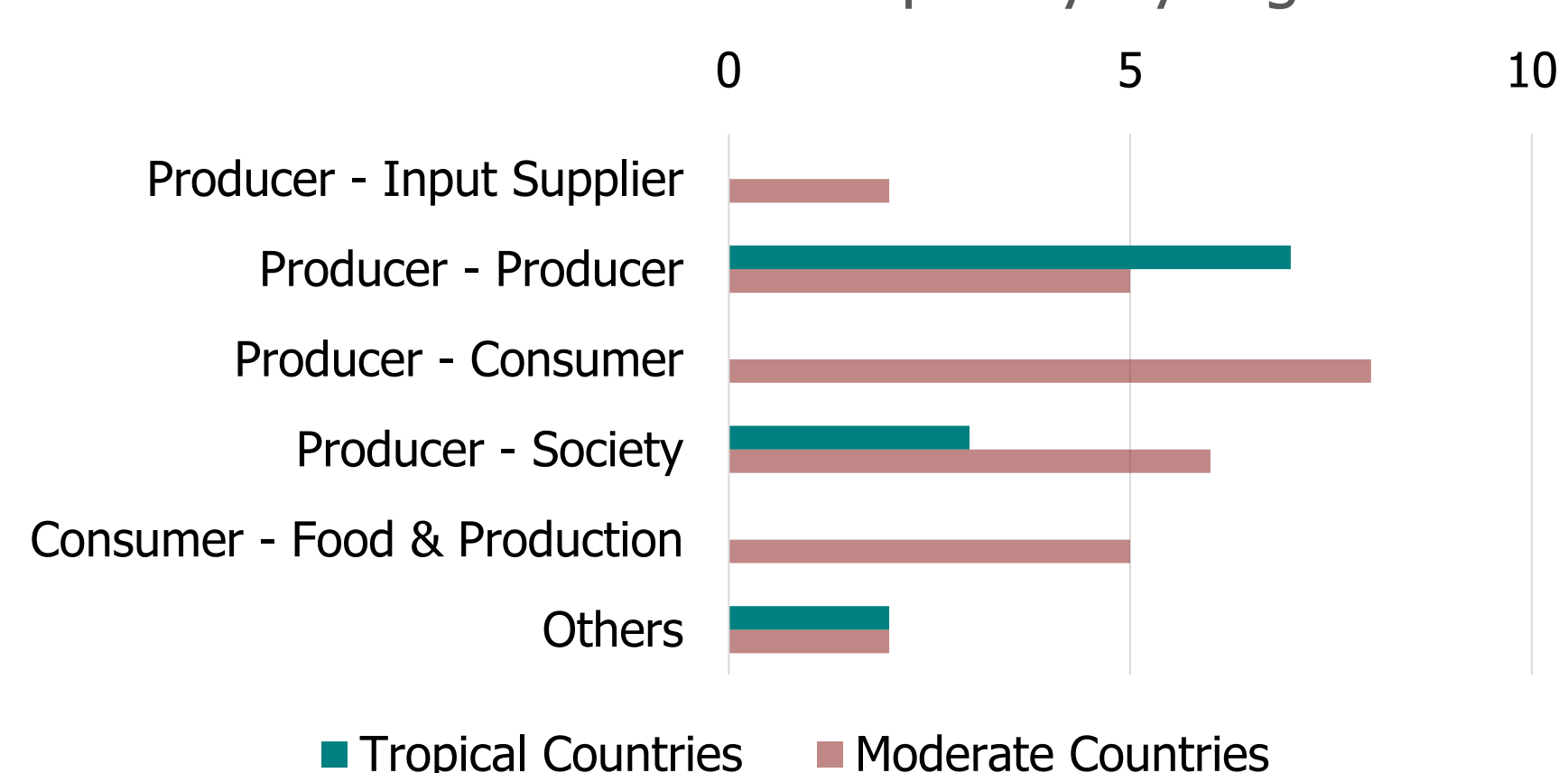
Out of studies included in the review:

- most conducted in European (55%), followed by South American countries (15%)
- only 4 out of 40 in low middle income countries¹ (incl. study in several African Countries)

¹acc. The World Bank (2021)

Changes in social relationships through Social Innovation

Category of relationship change as described in absolut frequency by region

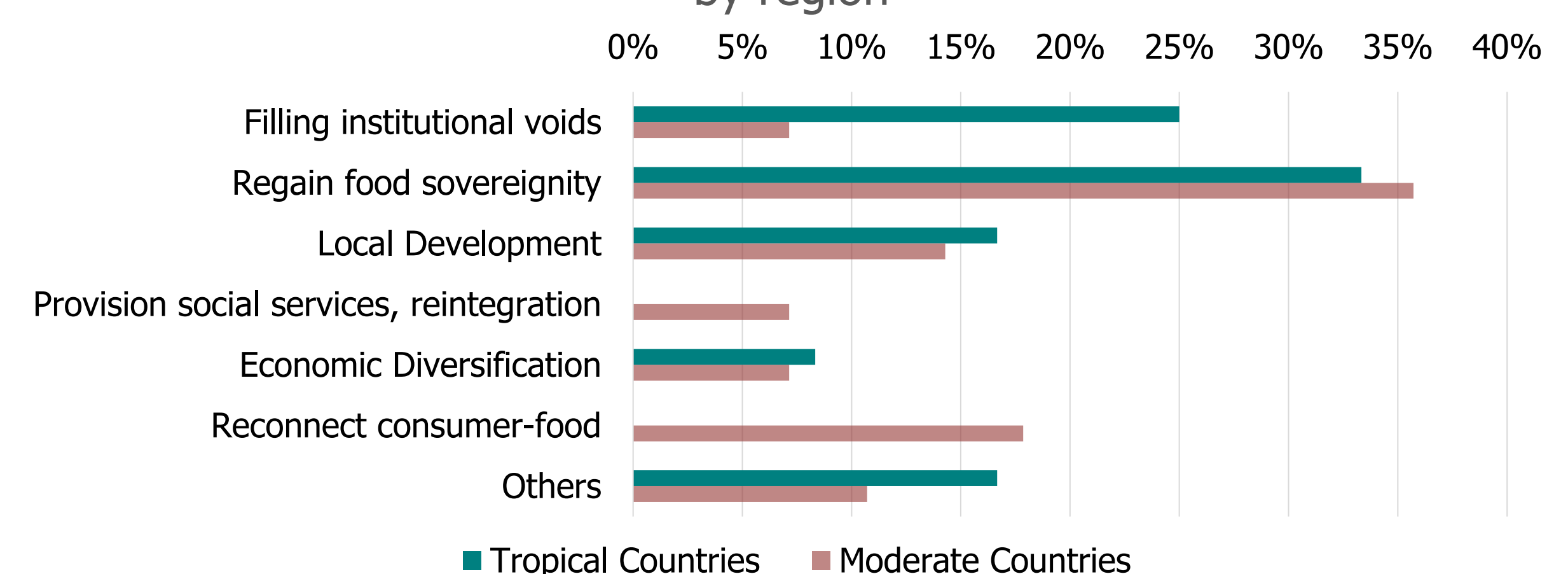


- Initiatives in moderate countries focus on changes in the relationships between producers and consumers (e.g., direct purchasing relationships, production according to agreed standards) or producer society relationships (e.g., social services (care, recreation) on farms or formats for problem-solving such as stakeholder platforms)

- Initiatives in tropical countries focus on new relationships between producers, who form groups to advocate, increase and exchange productive resources (e.g., finances, labour, knowledge)

Social Needs addressed by Social Innovation initiatives in different regions

Category of social need as described in relative frequency by region



- In both regions, control over food production and consumption shall be regained: in moderate countries mainly from transnational cooperations, in tropical countries mainly from national actors (intermediaries, governments)

Outcomes described from Social Innovation Initiatives

Outcome Category	Tropical Countries	Moderate Countries
Changes on Individual Level		
Improved of production (quality), productivity and economic income	57%	41%
Improved access to (productive) resources and services	13%	11%
Improved capacities and human capital	8%	9%
Changes on Community Level		
New networks/ communities	17%	2%
Reconfiguration of power structures, norms and values within initiative or local community	30%	44%
Changes on Society Level		
Create awareness and establish public debate, integrate goals/positions into (inter-)national agendas	9%	12%
	13%	15%
	9%	9%

Note: not all analysed subcategories at each level presented

- In tropical countries, most outcomes are described as improved capacities and human capital on individual level, as result of exchange of knowledge with other SI members (→ in line with relationship change), but also institutional changes on local level are achieved
- In moderate countries, effects on individual and community level are equally reported.
- In both regions, outcomes on societal level are least attributed

Conclusions

- Despite similarities, different foci in needs and relationship changes can be observed in both world regions: in moderate countries, changes are aimed rather for at societal and social level (values, norms) thus between heterogeneous actors, whereas in tropical countries, focus is more on individual and economic level (access to inputs and markets) and between actors at the same level of the value chain
- In both regions, social innovation initiatives lead to positive outcomes on individual and community level of practices and thus might be considered a worthwhile complement in the agro-food sector, which is dominated by technical innovation, but requires systemic transition
- Fewer publications and fewer diversity of forms: potential for social innovation in tropical countries might be underexploited despite their described effectiveness and assumed suitability for low external input environments due to their immaterial nature

References

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