

THEMATIC ARTICLES – CHALLENGES OF IMMIGRATION: BETWEEN ADAPTATION AND RETURNING HOME?

Romanian Immigrants Worldwide: What makes them Return Home?

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Abstract. Since economic factors cannot fully explain the determinants of bilateral migration, this study explores the social and cultural determinants that influence an individual's decision to migrate. Values, norms and interests in a given culture, may determine whether an individual's intention to move translates into actual migration. Work values inherent in different cultures could explain why people move or do not move under the condition of perceived economic advantages of migration. A gravity type migration model is used to incorporate variables related both to economic indicators and work values. It is perhaps the first migration study to use the World Value Survey (WVS) and the European Value Survey (EVS). We use 2000 stock bilateral migration dataset collected by the World Bank. Our findings indicate that if more aspects of work are valued in a country, this country sends more migrants. Also we show that countries with higher extrinsic work value orientation tend to send more migrants, while countries with higher intrinsic work value orientation tend to send fewer migrants. Our finding shows that the value of work and the level of job security in a country may significantly change migration decision.

Keywords: *return migration, Romania, migrants' profile, logistic regression model*

Introduction

Faced with workforce shortages in some economic sectors, prior to the global economic crisis Romania had started to give closer attention to the return migration, as an alternative to boarder opening for foreign workers. Enhanced skills and international knowledge diffusion through return migration have also been seen as additional benefits for the Romanian economy. Although the recent economic crisis temporarily diminished the interest for return migration, it is likely to re-emerge as a matter of interest in the post-crisis environment.



The return decision-making process, as well as the factors which influence the duration of temporary migration of Romanian emigrants is still to be researched. While emigration is generally acknowledged to be driven by better conditions in the destination country (with wage differentials as a main factor of attraction) knowledge on return migration requires additional qualitative information on the immigrant and its family.

Although understanding the return migration decisions is important for shaping the appropriate migration policies, researches on this topic are scarce and inconclusive in Romania and one of the main reasons may be the lack of appropriate data. We contribute to filling this gap by bringing recent information on Romanian immigrants worldwide. Specifically, we aim to identify the main drivers of return migration in an economic crisis environment and for this purpose we are to model the return decisions of Romanian immigrants using the database issued from our 2010 online survey.

The remainder of this paper is as follows. The next section briefly reviews the literature on return migration. Section 3 describes the online survey which provided the data for this study. Section 4 explains the methodology we employ in the empirical analysis, alongside the selected variables, while Section 5 comments the key results from the econometric modeling. Last, Section 6 offers the concluding comments.

Literature review

Migration flows are neither one-sided nor irreversible. Even in the case of thought to be permanent migration, a large part of the immigrants may later decide to return in the sending country and, if a longer period of time is considered, return migration may reach proportions as high as two thirds of the immigrant workers in Germany and over four fifth in Switzerland (Bohning, 1984, Glytsos, 1988). For the United States, Borjas and Bratsberg (1996) have measured the return-migration rates for immigrants coming from 70 countries, over a five year period, finding the highest values for European and North American immigrants (over 30%). They also found that largest part of the immigrants who decided to return home did so within the first five years of residence but, in contrast, immigrants coming from poor and geographically distant countries were less inclined to leave.

Given the diversity of issues brought about by migrants' return to homeland, a multitude of research angles have emerged: the magnitude and dynamics of this

process, demographic characteristics of the returning migrants, factors of influence, duration of stay, influence of the geographic region, reintegration in the homeland society, social and economic effects on the home country, etc. As regards the reasons for returning to homeland, empirical studies identified three main groups of factors that may influence, either directly or indirectly, the return decision: personal attributes of the migrants (age, gender, race, education, etc), family situation, and social, economic and political factors.

One of the most common reasons for return migration is the acquirement of the necessary capital to start a business back home. For instance, Callea (1986) finds out that returning emigrants to Southern European countries most often want to set up an independent enterprise. In the same register, Borjas and Bratsberg (1996) found two main explanations for the migrants' decision to return to their countries of origin, based on their **economic performance**. Firstly, economically successful emigrants return when they have accumulated enough financial resources. Secondly, erroneous information may entail economic failure of some migrants, further triggering the decision to return home (especially if the return costs are low) as earlier works of Da Vanzo (1983) and Pessino (1991) have already pointed out. Similar conclusions are reached by Edin et al. (2000) researching migration to Sweden. They confirmed that it is the least economically successful immigrants who leave. Discriminating between economic and political immigrants, they also indicated that the latter are much less likely to return. In sharp contrast with these findings, Gmelch (1983) questions the relevance of economic-based models in explaining return migration, based on the case of the Irish and Newfoundland returnees, which were motivated primarily by the attachment to the home country or social and familial considerations.

A number of studies have explored the role of the **family**-related issues in the household's decision-making process related to the return migration. Callea (1986) suggested that return decisions of the emigrants originating from Southern European countries are largely based on concern for children's education. Djajic (2008) addressed parents and children conflicting influence in the household's return decision, with the parents trying to keep the family united, while the children prefer to remain in the host country as they are usually better integrated.

Huber and Nowotny (2009) stated that **education**, as well as distance, are the most significant determinants for migrants' duration of stay, while networks are insignificant. Borjas and Bratsberg (1996) also pointed to the importance of education: they reported that for the positively selected immigrant flows (i.e. above average skills)



the least skilled migrants will be the first to return homeland. Another aspect discussed in the literature is the potentially high reward in the homeland for the skills acquired abroad. For instance, Iara (2006) documented significantly increased earnings capability of East European immigrants returned from Western Europe.

Distance may also play a role in the return decision: the shorter the geographic distance, the greater the chances to maintain strong ties with family and friends in the homeland. However modern instant communication at low costs and the decreasing costs of transport tend to diminish the impact of this factor.

Exploring the determinants of return migration intentions among the guest workers in Germany based on survey data, Waldorf (1995) reported a strong influence of the satisfaction and **time**-dependent variables and a lesser impact of the personal attributes of the immigrants. In the same register, Dunstmann researched the return intentions of migrant workers in Germany and found three main reasons favoring temporary migration against permanent one: relative price differences between the origin and destination country, enhanced earnings in homeland based on the human capital accumulated abroad, and complementarities between consumption and the environment where consumption takes place. Van Baalen and Muller (2008), analyzing temporary migration to Germany, found that immigrants tend to extend their stay in the receiving country much longer than initially intended, the strongest reason being the delays in reaching their savings plan.

Several studies have focused on **ethnic** return migration specifics as well. For instance, researching the migration behavior of Estonian descendants after the Second World War, Kulu (1998) argues that ethnic return migration over a long period depends mainly on changes in people's values, habits, identity and it is not influenced, neither directly or indirectly, by momentary environmental changes. Tsuda (2010) compares ethnic return migration policies in European and East Asian countries and discusses the measures that can be employed in order to encourage emigrant descendants born and raised abroad to return to their ethnic homeland.

In Romania there are several strands of recent literature which discuss the determinants, scope and effects of the large Romanian emigration starting from the opening of the borders in 1990. Following a first wave of ethnic migration in the early 1990 (mostly Germans, but Jews and Hungarians as well) temporary work migration became preponderantly, increasing especially after the abolition of the Schengen visa and illegal forms of migration escalated as well (Constantin et al, 2008, Goschin et al., 2009). The amplitude of the migration phenomenon made it a matter of concern for

the Romanian society, fueling many public debates and empirical research (Constantin et al, 2004 and 2008, Silasi and Simina, 2008, Roman, 2010, Sandu, 2010 etc).

Return migration has also been approached in a number of studies. Although slightly increasing in the context of the economic downturn in the main destination countries for Romanian emigrants, return migration did not confirm the large figures that had been expected (Serban, 2009), as Romanian economy also faced crisis-related difficulties. Social attitude surveys conducted in countries with large Romanian communities, such as Italy and Spain, have revealed preponderantly negative perceptions of Romanian immigrants (e.g. McMahon, 2011) seemingly with little or no impact on the return flows.

Ghita et al. (2007) found a negative and relatively strong correlation between the return migration ratio and the education index. They emphasized that returnees may bring potential benefits for Romania in terms of work experience, improved productivity, financial capital, and even new technological ideas from developed countries. Sandu (2005) reveals the existence of a territorial clustering type of the return migration to Romania, with 4 percent of the villages accounting for above 60 percent of the total returnees. Building on a country wide representative sample of emigrants returned in Romania, Epstein and Radu (2008) documented significant wage premia for returnees, depending on the educational level of migrants.

The study realized by Sandu (2009) reveals interesting results in respect with Romanians decision to return. The survey *Romanian Communities in Spain* conducted in 2008 shows that a large share of Romanian migrants living in the region of Madrid have the intention to return (71%), while the rest of 29% wished to remain in Spain. In the same study, the author compares the results he obtained with the intentions to return expressed by Romanian migrants in the *Enquesta Nacional de Inmigrantes (ENI)* realised by the Spanish National Institute for Statistics at the end of 2006 and beginning of 2007. He found out that only 7% of Romanian migrants living in Madrid region wished to return to Romania. The difference is accounted for by the different ways the questionnaires were designed, but also by the fact that in 2007 the beginning of crisis has already been felt in Spain, while Romanian governments denied the existence of a crisis in Romania up until the very end of 2008.

Shima (2010) explored return migration of Romanian and Bulgarian migrants in connection to the labour market outcomes of the returnees. She conducted a model based analysis of wage premium, using data from World Bank surveys and concluded that the labour market upgrading among Romanian returnees has a positive



relationship with the intentions of a permanent return and the wage premium.

Therefore, the likelihood that the Romanian migrants return permanently is still low compared to circulatory or seasonal migration, conclusion that is also supported by other researchers (Barbulescu 2009, Marcu 2010).

The database

Any attempt to measure migration related issues is marked by the shortage of official data. Official Romanian statistics refer to permanent emigration exclusively; therefore they capture only a small percent of the real dimension of this phenomenon. More information on temporary migration came from the migration statistics of the main destination countries of Romanian migration, such as Spain, Italy, Germany, Canada, USA. Additional information may be provided by special surveys in countries hosting large Romanian communities, such are those financed by Soros Foundation in 2006, 2008 and 2011. Even combining all these data sources, it is difficult to draw a reliable picture of Romanian emigration, due to statistical shortcomings and measurement problems associated to temporary and illegal migration (Tompea, 2009).

In order to obtain the necessary data on Romanian emigration we conducted an online survey (Romanian Emigration Survey- RES henceforth) that covered a period of almost five months: between July 22nd and December 11th 2010. As it was started during the summer holidays, when the availability of respondents was low, most of the respondents completed the questionnaire in the autumn. The final database included information from 1514 respondents in 52 countries. Respondents were asked questions on a variety of topics covering a large research agenda: income, employment, remittances, regions of origin and destination, graduated studies both in Romania and in emigration country, length of migration and intention to return to Romania.

Due to limited financial resources and lack of data on spatial dispersion of Romanian immigrants, the research team turned to an online questionnaire, instead of face to face or postal survey methods. Moreover, the online format is the cheapest and quickest way to build an extensive, various and territorially dispersed database. The questionnaire employed in our survey accommodates a suite of 51 questions of various types: simple and multiple questions, questions with multiple listed answers, quantitative and qualitative questions, and also open ended questions that gave the respondents the opportunity to express freely their ideas.

The questionnaire was structured as follows:

- General information: personal attributes (age, gender, religion), duration of migration
- Geographic information: Romanian county of origin, destination country and region
- Family: total number of children and number of children under 18, the number of family members living in the immigration country.
- Education: last graduated studies in Romania, studies in the emigration country
- Professional status: profession, current occupation, economic sector of the first job abroad, current economic sector of activity
- Employment and earnings: monthly earnings for the first job abroad, current monthly earnings
- Remittances: remittent or not, top three reasons to remit, annual remitted amount
- Return intention and reasons.

Research methodology and variables

Our objective is to test, from an econometric modeling perspective, the influence of various factors on the return decision of the Romanian immigrants. We expect return migration intentions to be influenced by personal characteristics, social links to destination country, economic performance and space attributes as well.

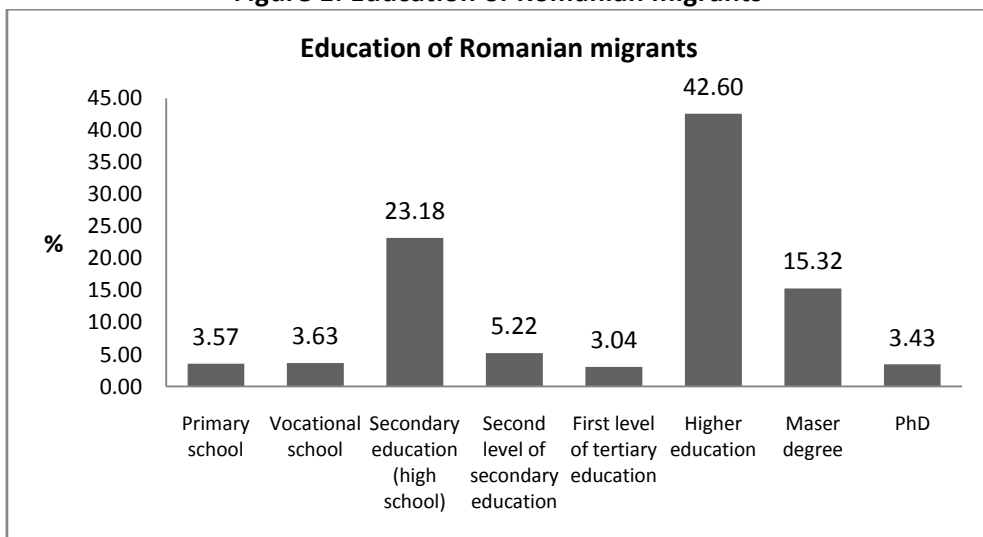
In order to assess the impact of the relevant factors that affect the return decision of the Romanian immigrants we rely on the logit model, frequently used in the literature on return migration decision. For instance, Waldorf (1995) has used logit models of the intention to return to homeland of guest workers in Germany, while van Baalen and Muller (2008) employed a multinomial logit model to identify the determinants of the probabilities of revising the intended duration of stay.

The intention of returning to Romania was included in the econometric approach as a binary variable coded 1 if the emigrant has the intention to return and 0 otherwise, being the dependent variable of the logistic regression model. The variables, numerical or categorical, describe the personal characteristics of migrants, the social and economic links to destination country, the links to Romania and the space of emigration.

Demographic predictors are used to describe the **personal characteristics of Romanian migrants**, including age, gender and religion. In our data, the average age of migrants is 36 and they are 63% male. Religious affiliation is captured through a dummy, 1 if the migrant is orthodox, 0 - otherwise. The distribution according to religious affiliation is dominated by orthodox denomination (77%), while the rest of 23% is covered by other denominations: catholic, protestant, neo protestant and no religion.

Education, as a measure for migrants' human capital, is included in the same category that describes the individual characteristic of migrants. The last level of education attended is a scale variable ranging from 1 to 8 and coded as follows: 1- primary school, 2- vocational school, 3-secondary education (high school), 4- second level of secondary education, 5-first level of tertiary education, 6- higher education, 7-master degree, 8-doctoral studies.

Figure 1: Education of Romanian migrants



Source: processed by the authors using RES data, 2010

The migrants in the sample are university graduates and postgraduates in large share (64%) and another important part of migrants have secondary education (28%), while graduates of vocational school (4%) or primary school (3%) have small shares. This distribution is skewed to the upper education levels, which are over represented among Romanian migrants in the sample, as a consequence of the survey methodology. The questionnaires were

administrated on line, therefore all the migrants in the sample are computer and internet literate, having at least the basic knowledge. Their human capital is superior compared to Romanian population and it is expected to have a higher level of education.

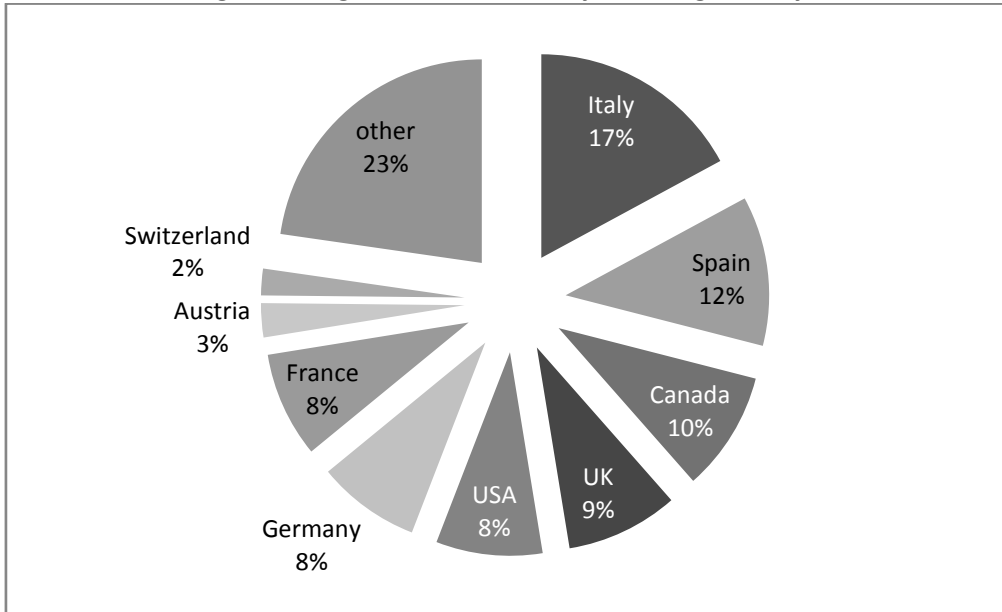
The **social and family links to receiving country** were captured by a group of three variables. The level of integration in the receiving society is evaluated through the number of years spent in the migration country. The lengths of migration stay have an average of 6 years, confirming that most of the Romanian migration is new. The family integration in receiving country is described through dummies coded with 1 if the migrant has partner or parents in the same country, and 0 otherwise. Out of the migrants having a partner, 80% live with their partner in destination country household, confirming the family type of Romanian migration. Only 10% instead have at least one parent in the receiving country.

The **economic links to receiving country**, as a picture of the economic integration of migrants, are described by occupational status (0 = unoccupied person, 1= occupied person) and by migrants income. Income was described using 11 classes of income, with an average of 5.77, corresponding to an average monthly level of 2385 USD.

Additionally, the remitting behaviour was included in the analysis as a measure for the **links to the sending country**. It was employed as a binary variable coded 1 if the emigrant sends money to the relatives living in Romanian and 0 otherwise. Remittances are one of the positive outcomes of the economic activity of emigrants, since they are a financial support for the families left home and also increase their life quality. The share of Romanian migrants in the sample that remit money is 54%.

Furthermore, dummy variables for the main **countries of destination** were constructed; the migrants' distribution by receiving country is presented in figure 2. Most of the migrants are concentrated in nine countries, mostly European. Among non European countries with significant share of migrants there are, as expected, Canada (10%) and USA (8%). In Australia are living about 1% of Romanian migrants in the sample, while other countries receive less than 1% migrants. We assume migrants living outside Europe would prove lower probabilities to return compared to migrants from European countries.

Figure 2. Migrants distribution by receiving country



Source: processed by the authors using RES data, 2010

Empirical findings

The econometric model considers migrants' intention to return to Romania as being the effect variable. The model is statistically significant and the significance of Hosmer & Lemeshow test (0.255) proves that the model fits the data. At the same time, the model explains in a good proportion the return intentions across Romanian migrants worldwide (Nagelkerke $R^2=0.155$, Cox&Snell $R^2=0.110$).

Table 1 displays the results of the logistic regression analysis. The personal characteristics of migrants have different impacts on the propensity to return. Return intentions do not seem to be significantly affected by respondents' age, while gender is a significant factor in the model. Males have a significantly higher probability to return compared to females.

Religious affiliation is also a significant factor; the migrants with orthodox affiliation are 1.5 times more likely to return than migrants with other affiliations. The migrants with other religious affiliation than orthodox usually have another ethnicity than Romanian: the reformat or catholic migrants are mostly Germans or Hungarians, and their ethnic migration is most likely to be permanent, compared to Romanians.

Table 1: Logistic regression of return migration intention (N=1514)

	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)
Migrants personal characteristics				
Age	0,008	0,009	0,401	1,008
Gender	0,538	0,171	0,002	1,713
Orthodox	0,402	0,191	0,036	1,494
Education	-0,057	0,048	0,235	0,945
Social links to receiving country				
Partner	0,627	0,177	0,000	1,872
Parents	-0,329	0,334	0,326	0,720
Time in receiving country	0,007	0,014	0,624	1,007
Economic links to receiving country				
Income	-0,063	0,032	0,046	0,939
Occupational status	0,236	0,241	0,326	1,266
Links to Romania: Remitting behavior	0,570	0,159	0,000	1,768
Receiving country ("other countries" is the reference group)			0,001	
Italy	0,152	0,235	0,518	1,164
Spain	-0,111	0,271	0,682	0,895
Canada	-0,935	0,304	0,002	0,392
UK	-0,006	0,284	0,984	0,994
USA	-0,904	0,324	0,005	0,405
Germany	-0,754	0,333	0,024	0,471
France	-0,847	0,340	0,013	0,429
Austria	-0,568	0,525	0,279	0,567
Switzerland	0,290	0,450	0,519	1,337
Constant	-2,246	0,536	0,000	0,106

Source: processed by the authors using RES data, 2010

The level of education is not significantly affecting the intentions to return. We have also controlled for education evaluated through dummies, the resulted effect being the same.

Social links to receiving country provide significant and various effects. Attachments to people in the destination country (presence of a partner or parents in the same country) seem to play an important role in the likelihood of intending to return. The partner effect is the strongest factor, increasing the

probability to return with 1,8 times compared to the persons living without their partner. The result could seem surprising, but it reflects the family type of Romanian migration, characterized by the fact that both partners are migrating, mainly for economic reasons, with the intention to return when they are achieving their migration objectives.

On the other hand, the presence of the parents in the same country has a negative effect, though without statistical significance. The parents' presence suggests a stronger attach to destination country that decreases the probability to return.

The length of stay abroad is not statistically significant, but it should be mentioned that, against our expectations, it has a positive impact on the likelihood of intending to return.

Economic factors have contrary effects on return intentions. The occupational status does not seem to have a significant effect on return intentions. However, the income level has a significant and negative impact: the higher is the income; the lower is the probability to return.

The ties to the origin country increase the strength of the return intentions. The maintenance of the links with Romanian relatives by sending them money shows an unequivocally positive correlation with return intentions. Those who remit are more connected to Romania, being significantly more inclined to return.

Finally, the destination country included in the analysis as categorical variable is overall statistically significant. Destination country dummies indicate that Romanians living in Canada, USA, Germany and France are significantly more likely to intend to return than their peers from the group described as "Other countries". The intention to return does not seem to be affected by the distance to country of origin, since Romanians from both European and non European countries present the same returning pattern. The effect is negative for all of these countries, but, against our expectations, the effect is positive – though not statistically significant- in the case of Italy, the country receiving the largest share of Romanian migrants and a country with cultural and linguistic proximities to Romania. In the years following the Romanian accession the EU (2007) there were large media campaigns in Italy against Romanian migrants (Uccellini, 2010) that might have pushed them to consider the returning home.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to identify the main drivers of return migration among Romanian immigrants worldwide and to measure the impact of the relevant factors on the propensity to return. We used the database resulting from the online survey we have conducted from August to December 2010, allowing us to capture the influence of the recent global economic crisis.

In the line with neoclassical migration theory, according to which migration is a utility maximizing behavior by individuals, we found that income has a negative impact on return intentions, and some personal characteristics such as gender and religious affiliation to orthodox denomination have the same effect. The presence of a partner in destination country is increasing the probability to return. The destination country also has a negative and statistically significant effect for the case of Canada, USA, France and Germany.

The return decision-making process of Romanian emigrants is still to be researched. Although some Romanian migrants are recently returning home, there is no clear evidence in the literature that the crisis has provoked or will generate a significant return. Economic crisis has not caused a wave of mass return of the Romanians working abroad, and those who have returned to the country most likely will stay for a short period of time.

Our research could potentially brought about useful information for decision makers, as understanding the reasons behind the return decisions may help them design the best suited migration policies. Unfortunately, at this moment there are not being developed policy measures in managing return migration in Romania. Concerning the potential returnees, measures such is the signature of bilateral cooperation agreements with the subject to support returnees once back in Romania would be necessary for the sustainability of returning process.

In sum, the picture of the Romanian return migration is complex and changeable, making difficult to draw a clear image at this moment in time. Has Romanian emigration reached its peak and more return migration is to be expected in the future? Further research in a post-crisis environment will be needed to answer this question.

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