



DEMO LAB
Laboratorio de Democracia.



ANNUAL REPORT
2021 - 2023

CONTENTS

| | |
|----|--|
| 01 | A WORD FROM OUR FOUNDER |
| 02 | THE GLOBAL STATE OF DEMOCRACY |
| 03 | OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS |
| 04 | OUR TEAM MEMBERS |
| 05 | MISSION & VISION |
| 06 | OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH |
| 13 | PROJECT 1 - CITIZEN OBSERVATORY |
| 17 | PROJECT 2 - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NOSARA |
| 19 | PROJECT 3 - SABANA DEVELOPMENT PLAN |

| | |
|----|--|
| 21 | PROJECT 4 - DEMOCRATIZING INTERNET ACCESS |
| 23 | PROJECT 5 - HENRIETTA THE MUSICAL |
| 25 | PROJECT 6 - THE LEVELLERS |
| 27 | WHAT'S NEXT |
| 29 | OUR 3 STRATEGIC PILLARS |
| 33 | RESEARCH |
| 35 | FINANCIALS |
| 37 | QUOTES |
| 39 | JOIN OUR MOVEMENT |

A WORD FROM OUR FOUNDER

Dear Supporters and Kindred Spirits,

In this moment of excitement and promise, I'm thrilled to share our journey at the Demo Lab foundation. We stand on the threshold of a remarkable chapter, thanks to your unwavering support and a pivotal contribution from our main donor and board member.

Our history has been one of exploration and experimentation, filled with bold projects that revealed our strengths and honed our focus. Today, we embrace a new direction, where impact matters more than ever. We're aligning our efforts with the initiatives that resonate profoundly, ensuring our impact is scalable and most potent.

In this annual report, we'll delve deeper into our new strategic approach for the future. We're also excited to share how we're actively shaping the democracy of the future, a vision that propels us forward.

As an integral element of our fresh strategy, we are consolidating all ongoing and upcoming projects under three core pillars that will guide our future endeavors: Education & Capacity building, Access to Decision-Making Processes and Citizen Entrepreneurship, Research, and Events. We will break each of these down in this report.

With each challenge, we find growth and innovation. As we stride forward, we remember that our pursuit is shared by those who dream big and work relentlessly to create change.

To every supporter and visionary, your belief drives our commitment. Together, we're not only shaping an organization but also a lasting legacy of impact.

With gratitude and determination,

Dr. Alvaro Salas Castro

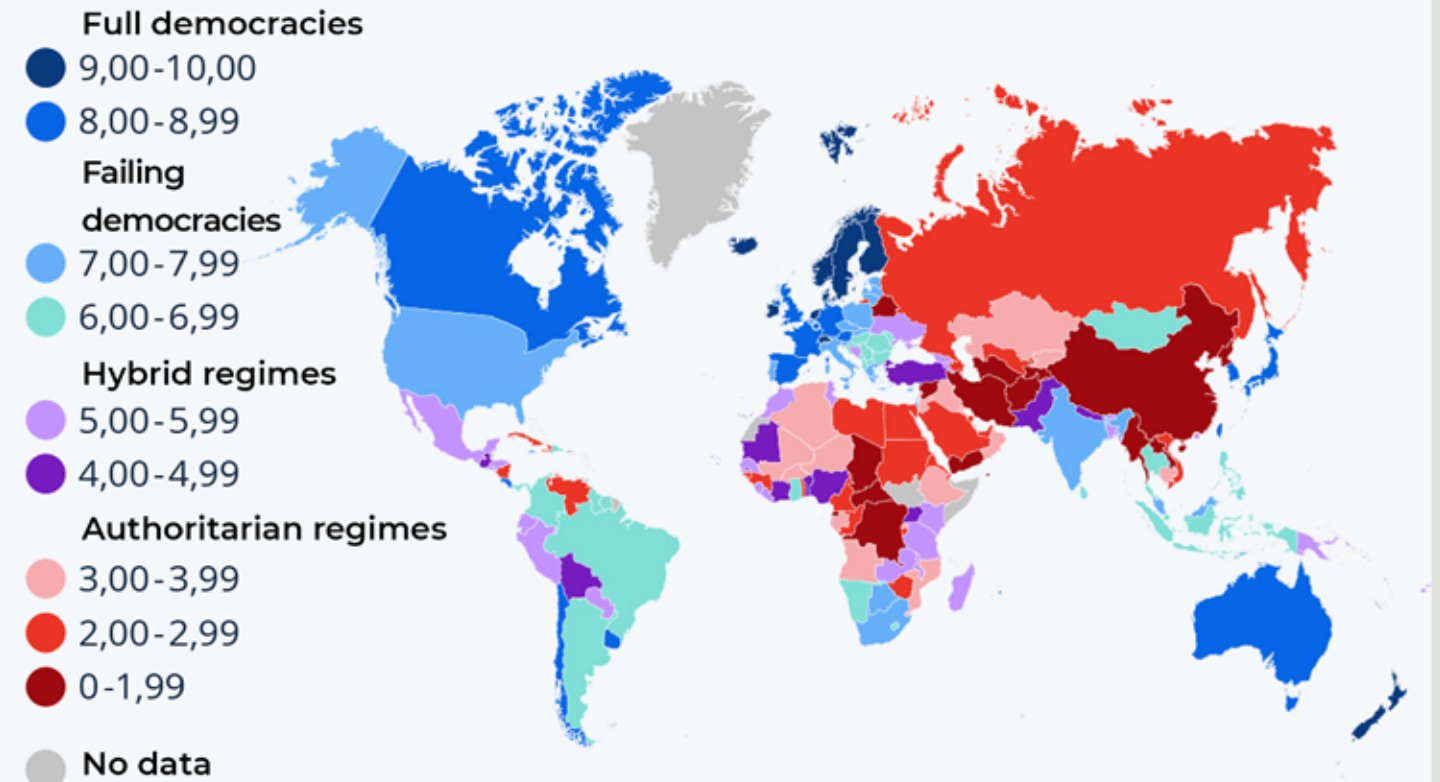


Founder, Demo Lab Foundation



THE GLOBAL STATE OF DEMOCRACY

Countries and territories ranked according to the Global Democracy Index 2022



Index based on five categories, process and pluralism, functioning of government, political participation, political culture and civil liberties

Source: The Economist Intelligent Unit

We're on a mission to become the most meaningful foundation on democracy & liberty.

If not us, who!?

Our Board of Directors



Our Team Members



MISSION

Our mission is to promote and foster citizen participation, towards the protection and strengthening of democracy and liberty.

VISION

A society that serves as a lighthouse for an authoritarianism ridden world because the heart of its democracy is its citizens, who actively protect and enhance freedom and democracy.

DEMO LAB MANIFESTO



Active Society = Innovative Solutions

WHO ARE WE?

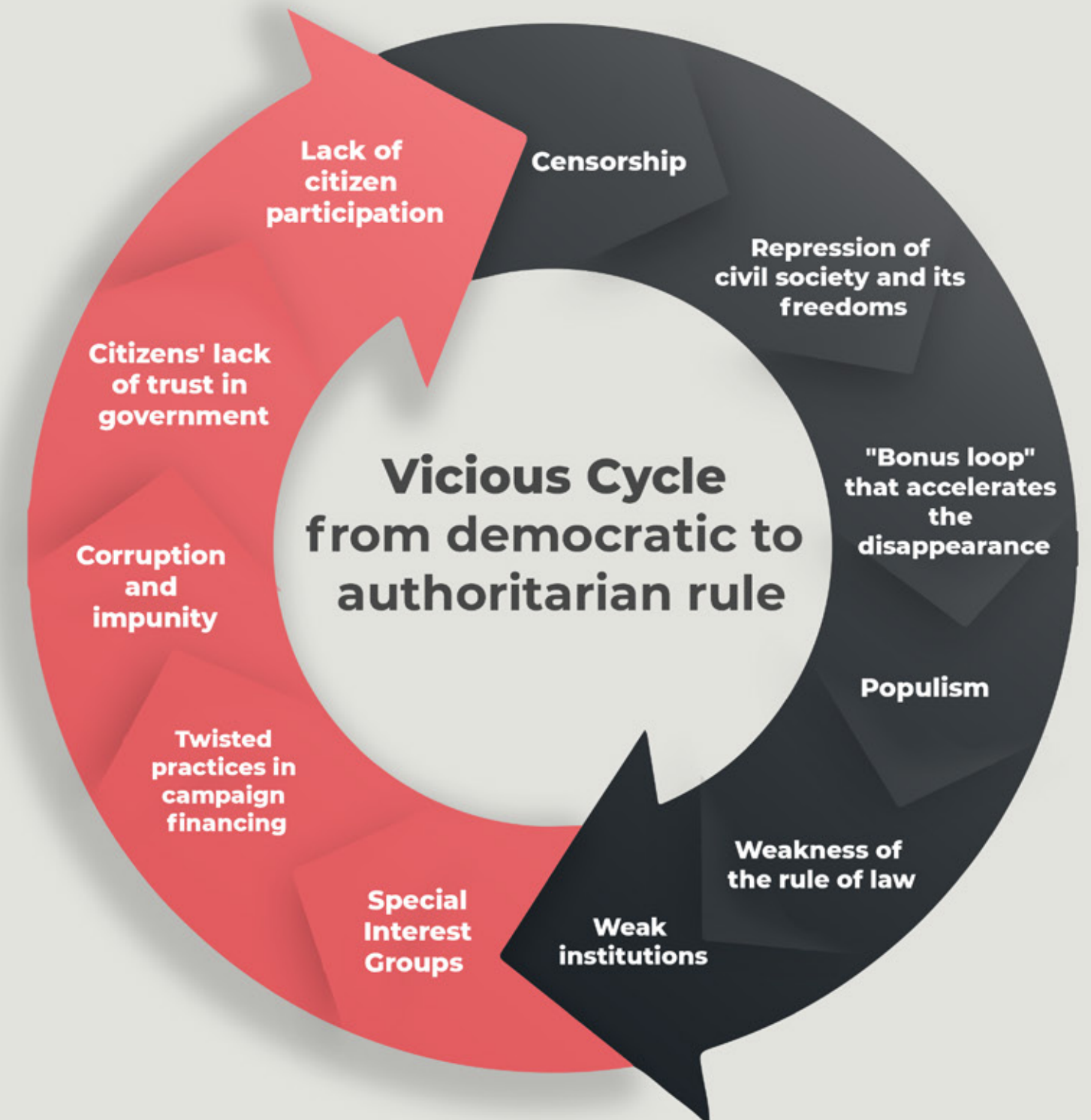
We are a diverse group of all professions and social conditions that share the firm conviction that the direction of our country is actively designed by its citizens.

HOW?

Demo Lab offers citizens new and innovative ways to actively participate in the processes of change in Costa Rica. Through art, culture and research, we generate spaces and tools to connect, listen and visualize the hopes and frustrations of citizens, evaluating new mechanisms for citizen participation and collaborative governance to strengthen Costa Rican democracy. Thus creating more and better citizen participation in decision-making processes due to an increase in mechanisms, accessibility, and understanding of key issues about the functioning of a free and democratic society.

PROBLEM

In Costa Rica and LATAM, there is a feeling of disillusionment and an erosion of trust in the functioning of our democracies and institutions, and its leaders. This is reflected in the high percentage of abstentionism and the lack of active citizen participation, which generates mistrust and raises transaction costs, political and financial risks, and the attacks on the rule of law by populist movements.



Source: Demo Lab, 2018

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH

Demo Lab Foundation is an innovative citizen participation laboratory.

WHAT?

Demo Lab Foundation is an innovative citizen participation laboratory.

WHY?

The health of any democracy is directly proportional to the quality and the quantity of citizen participation. We believe in this statement for two reasons:

1 Because even though there are things to be corrected, Costa Rica's democracy is a beacon of hope in the midst of a region that has been marked by authoritarian and undemocratic governments. And during a time when democracies at a global level are being put to test, a stable, fair, and representative democracy is the foundation of a prosperous and sustainable society. Hence, we must not take our democracy and liberty for granted; instead, we should actively protect and strengthen them every day.

2 Because our Constitution is one of the few in the world which puts the people as the center of the government, it demands we actively participate in it.

Article 9- The Government of the Republic is popular, representative, participative, alternative and responsible. It is exercised by the people and three different and independent powers: The Legislative, the Executive and the Judicial.

OUR BELIEFS

- Pluralism and collaboration
- Free expression, freedom of press, and economic and religious freedoms
- Separation of powers
- Free and fair elections
- Rule of law
- Civic participation in the decision-making
- Evidence-based policies and data-driven decision-making
- Creating a platform for global gatherings of democracy, freedom champions, and intellectual entrepreneurs

THE PROJECTS WE TACKLED

During
2021-2023
we focused on
6 Projects
to activate citizen
participation.



PROJECT 1 - CITIZEN OBSERVATORY

The Diputometer became a dual tool for citizen participation:

- 1 Representative Voting:** Empowered citizens to cast votes, gauging public sentiment on bills and assessing deputy representation.
- 2 Bill Presentation Support:** Aided citizens in crafting bills, offering guidance on format and content in alignment with Legislative Assembly standards.

Objectives:

- **Information Democracy:** Ensure accessible information.
- **Transparent Legislation:** Illuminate legislative actions.
- **Citizen Engagement:** Mobilize active participation.
- **Reliable Insights:** Provide trustworthy information.
- **Advocacy Inclusivity:** Bridge advocacy gaps.

Results:

- **2 Years of Operation:** Successfully running for 2 years.
- **4 Years of Updated Data:** Maintaining up-to-date legislative information for 4 years.
- **Media Recognition:** Garnered 10+ media references.
- **Broad Outreach:** Attracted 22,500+ unique visitors.
- **Active Engagement:** Facilitated numerous interactions through participation tools.
- **Atlas Network Grant:** Expanded reach through Atlas Network grant

Legislative Observatory: Open State Civic Parliament

The Open State Civic Parliament is an advocacy space composed of various sectors within civil society. It is tasked with analyzing, deliberating on, and crafting bills related to citizen participation, innovation, and ethics.

Objectives:

- **Citizen Feedback on Bills:** Gather public opinions on legislative bills.
- **Championing Citizen Initiatives:** Initiate projects that enhance and democratize citizen participation processes in Costa Rica, fostering greater engagement and impact.

Results:

- **Successful Bills:** 2 bills successfully passed.
- **Citizen Participation Bill:** Actively developing the Citizen Participation Bill.
- **Leadership Role:** Elected with an absolute majority to chair the ICPC.
- **Efficiency Acknowledgement:** The Advocacy and Citizen Participation Commission recognized as the most efficient.
- **Election of Stefano Cattani:** Stefano Cattani, Project Director of Demo Lab, elected with an absolute majority to chair the Advocacy and Citizen Participation Commission (August 2021 - August 2022).



Electoral Observatory: Apolitical

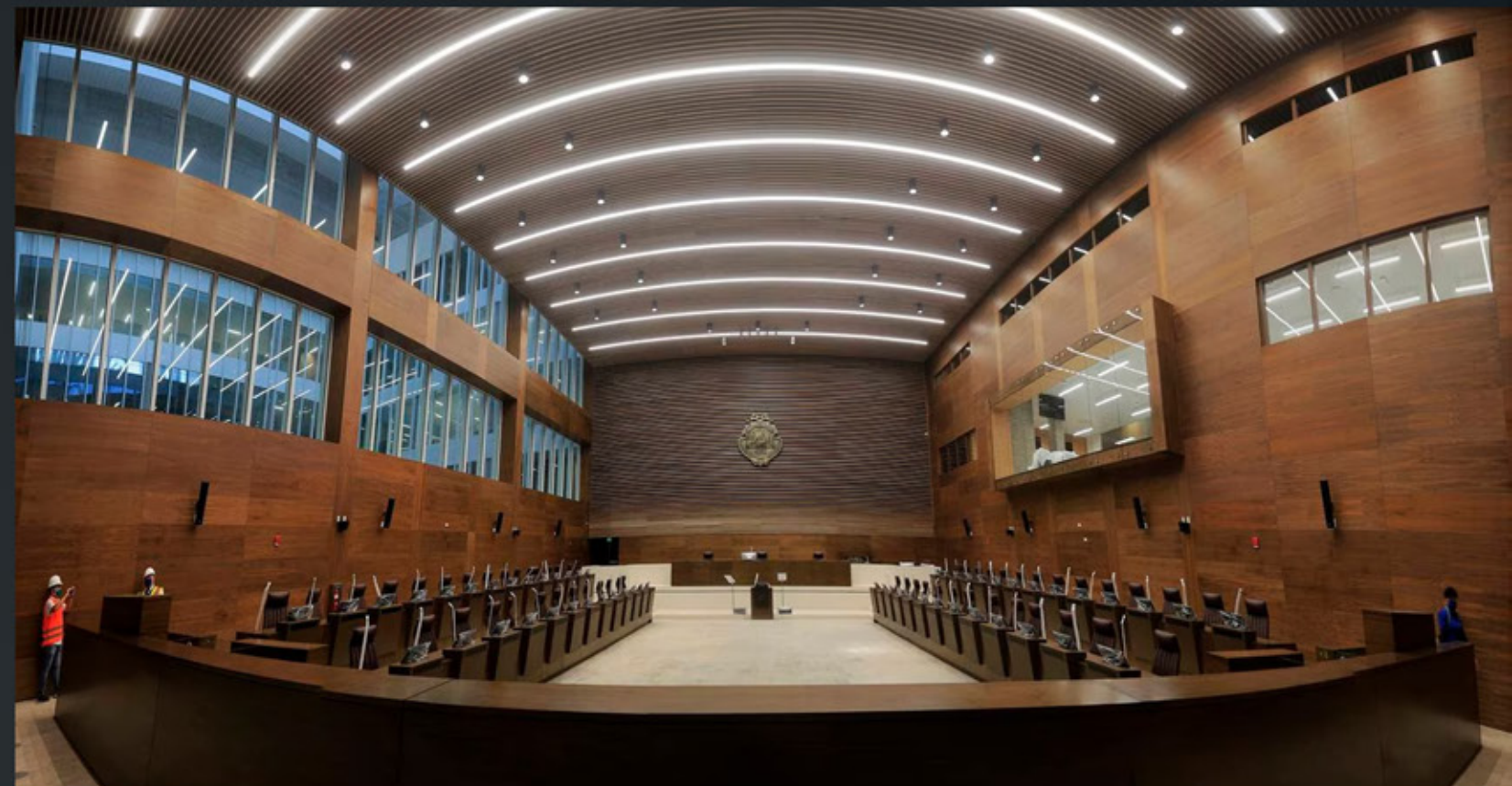
Apolitical is a collaborative tool developed by No Pasa Nada and Demo Lab, designed to assist undecided voters during the 2022 presidential elections in Costa Rica. It serves as a platform for monitoring candidate proposals, accessing informative infographics, interviews, and debates, all aimed at empowering voters to make informed decisions. We reached 1,000,000 viewers.

Objectives:

- **Guiding Undecided Voters:** Assisting in decision-making for uncertain voters.
- **Transparent Candidate Proposals:** Offering concise details about candidates' plans to young voters in Costa Rica.
- **Fighting Abstention:** Aiming to decrease abstention rates through engagement.

Results:

- **Strategic Partnership:** Forging an alliance with No Pasa Nada, a digital platform popular among millennials and centennials, to encourage informed voting.
- **Highly Viewed Candidate Interviews:** Conducting interviews with 2022 election candidates, garnering nationwide viewership.
- **User-Friendly Candidate Information:** Hosting a website with candidate details presented in accessible formats.
- **Election Day Livestream:** Organizing a livestream on election day, featuring Demo Lab's active involvement.



Project 2 Sustainable development in Nosara

Nosara faces tensions between residents, newcomers, visitors and real estate developers. Climate change, inequality and lack of land-use planning have fractured social cohesion. Residents' priorities were explored through interviews and public deliberations.

There are four perspectives on the future of Nosara, with consensus on the need for a sustainable development plan. The Q methodology excels in participatory approaches to environmental policies and conflicts.

Objectives:

- **Identify Common Ground:** Discover shared interests to form a foundation for sustainable development initiatives.

Results:

- **Interdisciplinary Dialogues:** Conducted cross-sectoral dialogue roundtables.
- **Sustainable Development Pathway:** Formulated a roadmap for crafting a sustainable development plan.
- **Strengthened Collaborations:** Established over 5 partnerships within the locality.
- **Academic Publication:** Published the academic article "Four Perspectives on a Sustainable Future in Nosara, Costa Rica" in the Sustainability magazine.



Project 3 Sabana Development Plan

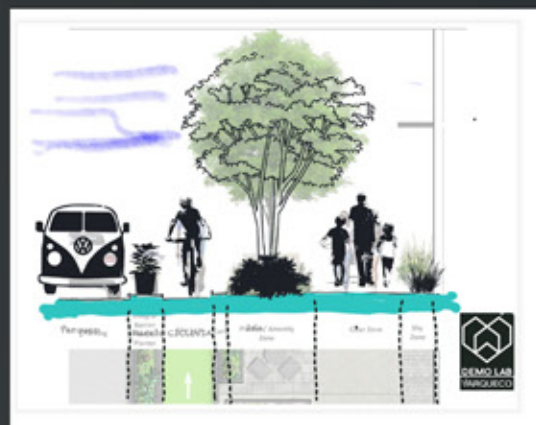
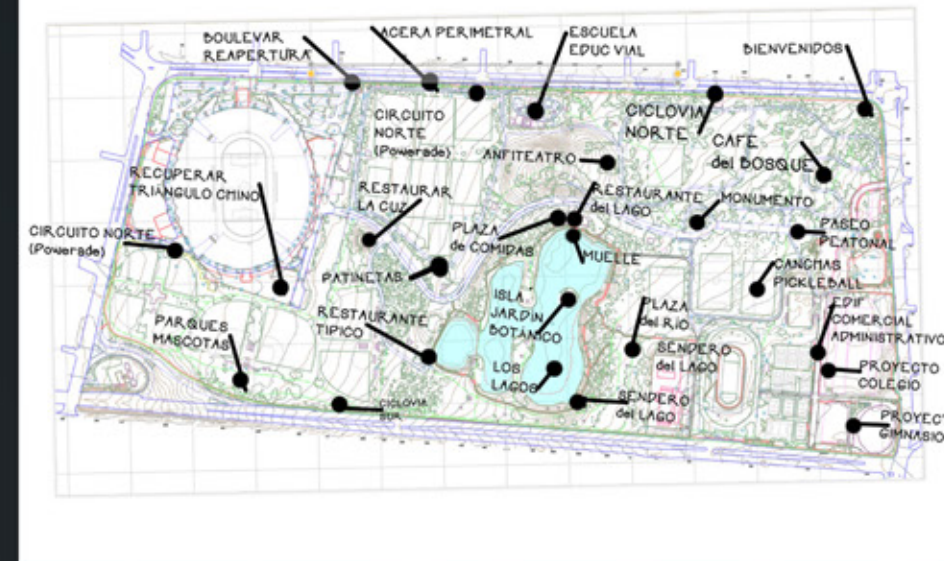
Through this development plan, our aim is to elevate La Sabana Metropolitan Park to its utmost potential in terms of aesthetics, safety, infrastructure, and operations by the year 2025, all within the framework of sustainability.

Objectives:

- **Sports, Recreation, and Local Tourism:** Encourage sports, recreation, and community tourism activities.
- **Technological and Innovative Identity:** Align the park with the narrative of a tech-savvy and innovative city.
- **Public Space Conservation and Enhancement:** Protect and improve public spaces within the park.
- **Sustainable Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster collaborations between public and private sectors to drive sustainable development.

Results:

- **Collaborative Agreement with ICODER:** Successfully signed an agreement with ICODER.
- **Innovative Methodology Creation:** Developed a participatory methodology for the intervention of public spaces, combining Place Making and Geographic Information Systems.



Project 4 Democratizing internet access

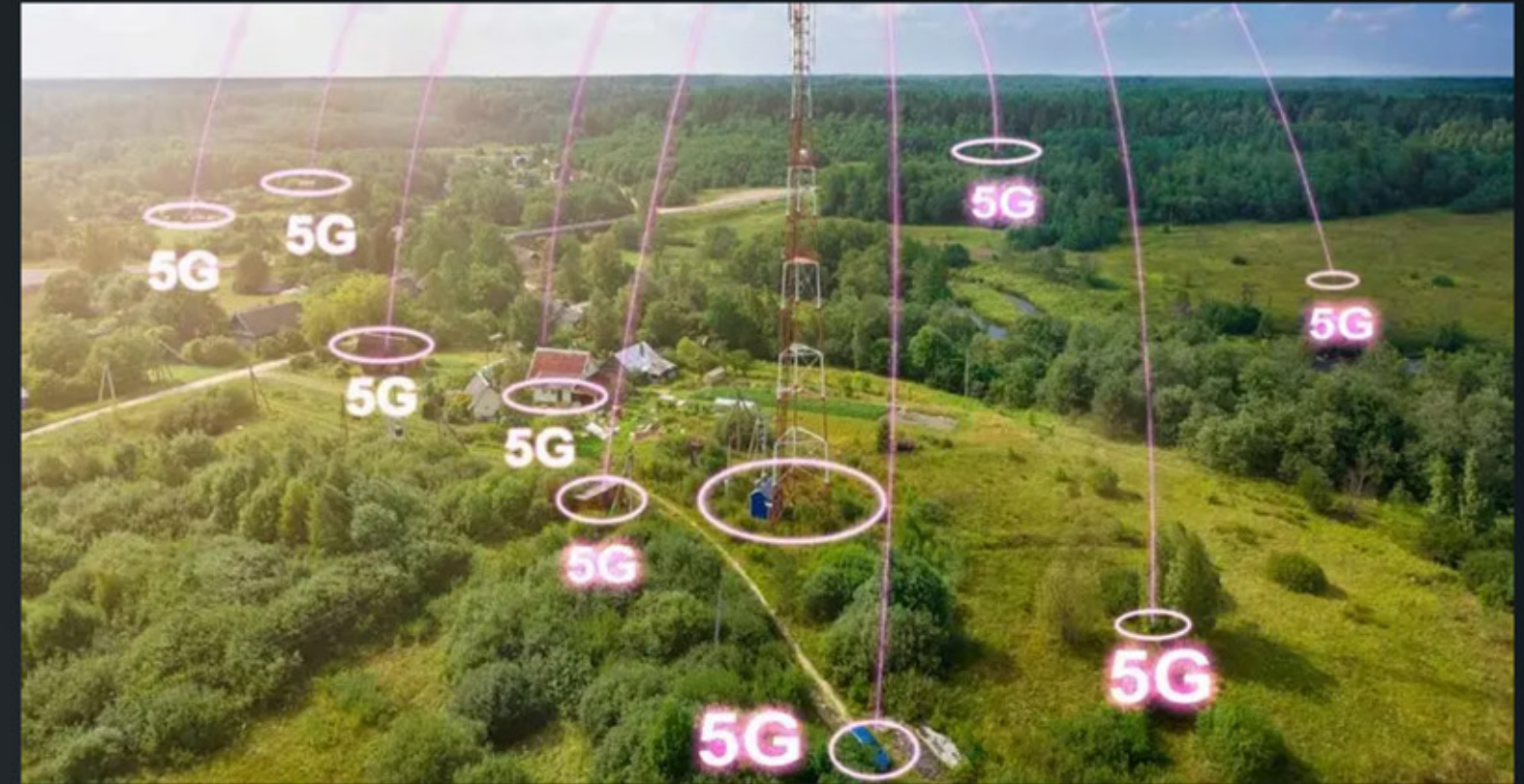
This project consists of bringing satellite internet backpacks to rural communities in Costa Rica, and is being carried out hand in hand with Syracuse University, thanks to an award that the foundation received from The Internet Society Foundation.

Objectives:

- **Bridging Rural Digital Divide:** Contribute to narrowing the digital gap in rural regions.
- **Enabling Health, Education, and Participation:** Offer internet access as a means to access healthcare, education, and civic engagement tools.
- **Generating Employment Opportunities:** Facilitate job prospects through increased internet accessibility.

Results:

- **Connectivity Achieved:** Enabled internet access for three communities comprising 1500 individuals, spanning across various age groups.
- **Delivery Success:** Internet backpacks were effectively delivered to Costa Rica, along with three out of the four chosen communities.
- **Empowered Community Leaders:** Selected and trained community leaders proficient in operating the Internet backpacks.
- **Sustainable Impact:** Community members are proficient in utilizing the backpacks and have future plans to sustain their usage post-project completion.



Project 5 Henrietta the Musical

Henrietta Boggs, the inaugural First Lady of Costa Rica during the revolutionary events of 1948, serves as the muse behind an inspiring musical theater production commemorating the nation's bicentennial. Spearheaded by Steve Aronson, Co-Founder of Demo Lab, this creative endeavor is an homage to Costa Rica's historical journey and enduring principles. Drawing inspiration from acclaimed works like "Hamilton" and "The Sound of Music," the project embarks on a quest to narrate the essence of Costa Rica. In collaboration with Demo Lab, insightful conversations, thought-provoking seminars, and theme-related activities converge to provide robust support for this artistic endeavor.

Objectives:

- Honoring Women's Role
- Marking Bicentennial: Celebrate Costa Rica's 200 years of independence.
- Unity in Diversity: Highlight how collaboration among diverse viewpoints has shaped Costa Rica.
- Art's Transformative Power: Challenge perceptions of the arts, emphasizing their profound impact.

Results:

- 15 Sold-Out Shows: 15 consecutive sell-outs showcase high demand.
- National Theater Milestone: Historic month-long presence at National Theater.
- Private Sector Backing: First fully private-funded production.



Project 6 The Levellers

The Levellers is a contemporary music band that seeks to enact civic participation and access to complex issues by combining arts and science as a channel to foster citizen initiatives.

Objectives:

- **Musical Reporting:** Present reports on democracy, citizen participation, freedom, and climate change using music as a medium.
- **Data Collection for Insights:** Gather data to comprehend citizens' sentiments and viewpoints.
- **Intergenerational Art and Music:** Bridge generations by fostering connections among individuals of varying ages through art and music.



WHAT'S NEXT



Over the last few years, we've been a laboratory for experiments on citizen participation.

We've been exploring many different avenues to create the impact we've always been committed to achieving. After many years learning, we've understood where we can focus our energies to create the most impact at scale. As a part of our new strategy, we are condensing all of our active and new projects into three main pillars in which we will be working moving forward.



OUR 3 STRATEGIC PILLARS

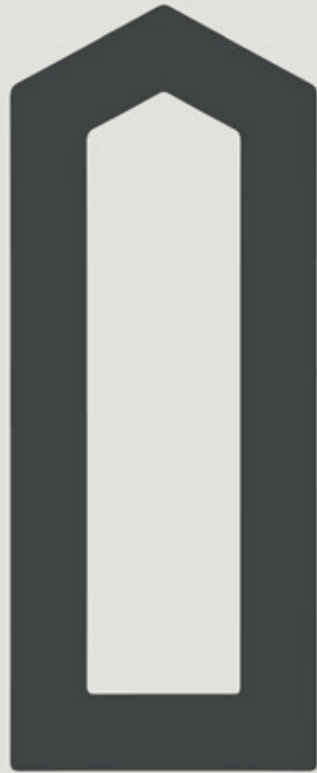


PILLAR #1 EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING:

PROJECT: CITIZEN LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Citizen Leadership Academy is a civic education academy created by the Demo Lab Foundation in collaboration with Dr. Tina Nabatchi, from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs and Dr. Roberto Artavia. Our target audience are young people between the ages of 15-23. The academy aims to empower young Costa Rican citizens to become leaders committed to entrepreneurship and the sustainable development of their country, by providing comprehensive education in democracy, citizen participation, the rule of law, economic principles and financial freedom, using digital media to escalate the modules nationally and regionally.

Strategic intent: The Academy aims to address challenges facing Costa Rican democracy and society by fostering active and effective citizen engagement, promoting transparency in public management and tax policies, and generating innovative solutions. Its goal is to build capacity in critical thinking, negotiation, soft skills, and cultivate committed and skilled citizen leaders who can significantly contribute to the social, economic, and environmental development of Costa Rica and Latin America.



PILLAR #2
**ACCESS TO
DECISION-MAKING
PROCESSES:**

PROJECT: CITIZEN OBSERVATORY

The Citizen Observatory is a citizen participation hub created by Demo Lab to provide young citizens with the information they need to understand the different projects being discussed in Costa Rica's congress, the tools to participate in the decision-making processes by voting for projects being discussed in congress and presenting new projects to make their voices heard.

Strategic intent: Through various projects and initiatives, the Citizen Observatory equips young citizens with the necessary information, tools, and spaces to become active participants in their country. Focusing on fostering participation at local and national levels, the Citizen Observatory collects and analyzes data, producing reports, research, and recommendations for decision-makers (i.e., congress) to enhance the accessibility of participation processes in state-related matters for citizens. This effort enhances democracy in Costa Rica and promotes increased citizen engagement and transparency.



PILLAR #3
**CITIZEN
ENTREPRENEURSHIP,
RESEARCH, AND EVENTS:**

ENTREPRENEURSHIP: CITIZEN INNOVATION LAB

The Citizen Innovation Lab (CIL) serves as a social, economic, and environmental innovation incubator aimed at supporting and promoting innovative and sustainable projects for society. It provides a space where citizens and civil society organizations can develop their social projects with Demo Lab's support, including funding, mentoring, corporate structure, strategy, and assistance in finding allies and volunteers (alumni of the Citizen Leadership Academy) for citizen social innovation start-ups

Strategic intent: To promote innovative and sustainable solutions to the country's problems, generating a positive impact on society.

RESEARCH

This is a vital part of our organization, conducting in-depth research on:

- 1** Freedom, deliberative democracy, citizen participation and collaborative governance
- 2** Behavioral Economics and Public and Private Partnerships
- 3** Sustainable Development
- 4** Competitiveness and entrepreneurship

With extensive experience in research projects and published work such as “Perceptions of Public-Private Partnerships in Costa Rica,” “Understanding Social Discontent through the Eyes of Marginalized Communities,” and “State of Democracy in Costa Rica: The Impact of Social Conditions on Democratic Perception,” we delve into critical issues, employing diverse methodologies and collaborations with academic institutions and civil society organizations.

Strategic intent

Our research provides valuable insights, informing evidence-based decision-making and driving positive change toward a freer and more participatory democracy.

EVENTS

Hosting impactful gatherings that foster citizen participation and strengthen democracy plays a pivotal role in our organization. Among our successful initiatives are:

BLISS Summit

Brings together philanthropists, activists, family offices, entrepreneurs, and executives of major corporations to discuss the threats to democracy in the Latin American region and collaborate on innovative solutions.

World Liberty Congress

Organized by Leopoldo Lopez, which brings together freedom fighters from around the world with the goal of joining forces and fighting together for freedom across the globe.

LATAM Liberty Forum

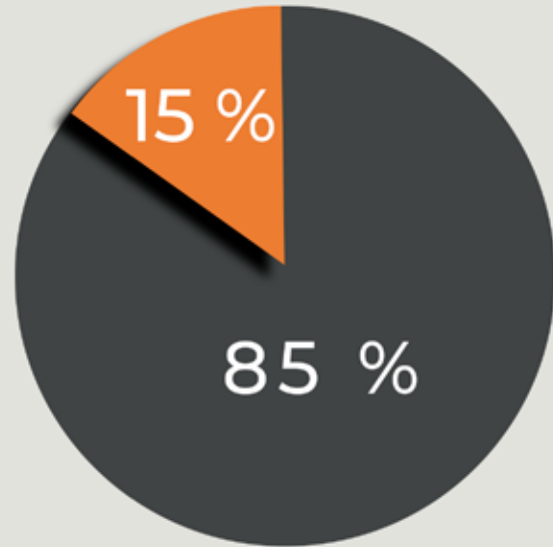
Organized by Atlas Network, which brings together activists, academics, and freedom advocates to learn, compete and celebrate together for freedom in Latin America.

Strategic intent

These events serve as platforms for knowledge exchange, networking, and mobilizing collective action to advance democratic principles and freedom. By creating spaces for dialogue and engagement, we empower citizens to actively participate in shaping their societies and promoting freedom. The Events Pillar not only amplifies the impact of our work, but also contributes to the global discourse on democracy and liberty, ensuring that Costa Rica remains at the forefront of democratic progress.

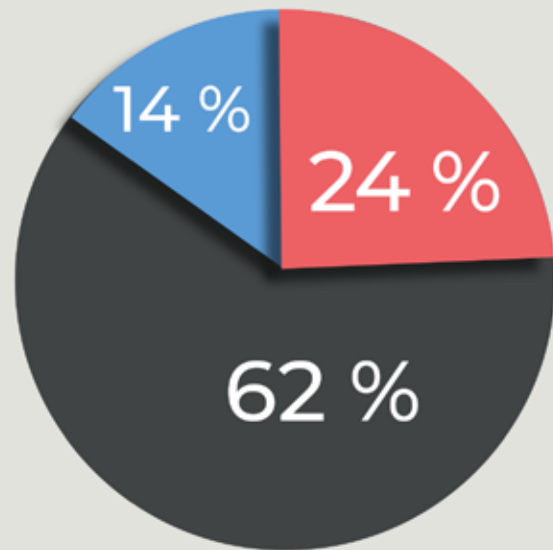
REVENUE JAN - DECEMBER 2021

- GRANT CONTRIBUTIONS
- INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS



EXPENSES JAN - DECEMBER 2021

- PROGRAMS
- DEVELOPMENT
- ADMINISTRATIVE

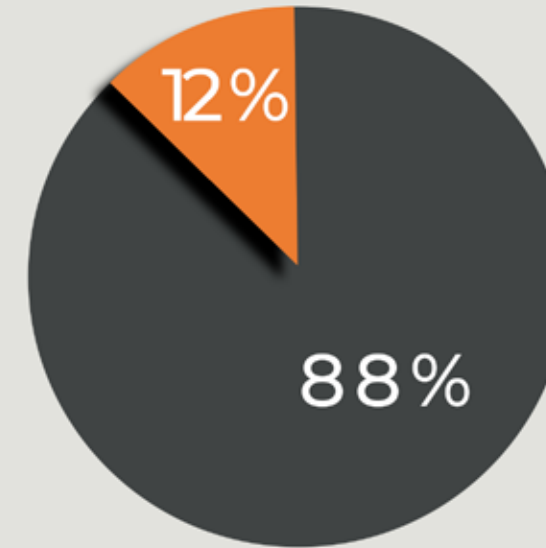


| Revenue | 2021 | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----|
| Grant Contributions | \$ 167,005 | 83% |
| Individual Contributions | \$ 34,316 | 17% |
| TOTAL | \$ 201,321 | |

| Expenses | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----|
| Programs | \$ 50,518 | 24% |
| Development | \$ 128,000 | 62% |
| Administrative | \$ 28,201 | 14% |
| Total Expenses | \$ 206,719 | |

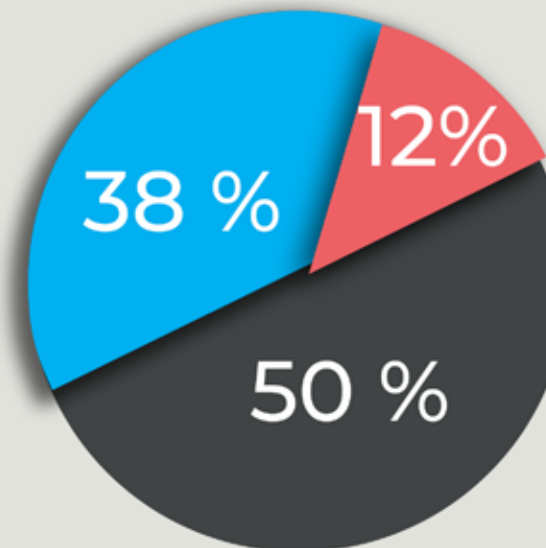
REVENUE JAN - DECEMBER 2022

- GRANT CONTRIBUTIONS
- INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS



EXPENSES JAN - DECEMBER 2022

- PROGRAMS
- DEVELOPMENT
- ADMINISTRATIVE



| Revenue | 2022 | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----|
| Grant Contributions | \$ 227,946 | 88% |
| Individual Contributions | \$ 31,083 | 12% |
| TOTAL | \$ 259,029 | |

| Expenses | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----|
| Programs | \$ 20,381 | 12% |
| Development | \$ 84,546 | 50% |
| Administrative | \$ 64,721 | 38% |
| Total Expenses | \$ 169,648 | |

QUOTES

Democracy is a shared matter, it must concern us together and its defense must keep us united. In DemoLab I found a space where, together with other people, I can contribute to protect it.

– Juan José Vargas.

The work that DemoLab is doing in order to create tools that allow citizens to participate and supervise the work of our politicians is fundamental for the construction of the new political culture of Costa Rica in the XXI century.

– Juan Carlos Chavarría.

Our family originally came from Cuba to Costa Rica. From dictatorship to democracy and freedom. I am excited to protect democracy and freedom from Costa Rica as a global center of freedom.

– Andres Bruna

Defending democracy is important because it ensures that people's voices are heard and their rights are protected. It enables fair and equitable governance and promotes the well-being of society as a whole.

Without democracy, there is a risk of oppression, corruption and inequality.

– Olga Jimenez.

I am an activist and working at Demo Lab for me means to follow the struggles that move me, to build a better society, to find the aspects that generate disagreements and turn them into actions oriented towards just causes, the protection of democracy and the fight for freedom

– Camila Carmona.

Cultivating virtuous cycles that intertwine the fortification of democracy and freedom is not solely the responsibility of governments or individuals, but a collective endeavor where philanthropists and the private sector play a pivotal role. As we navigate the intricate tapestry of society, it is in our mutual interest to weave threads of empowerment, education, and collaborative action. By doing so, we not only safeguard the tenets of a thriving democracy but also cultivate a legacy of resilience and progress for generations to come.

– Tim Reynolds

I had a great time at BLISS and met great leaders fighting, in a good way, for what they believe in. It brought together outstanding people from all around and it was an eye opener of the impact that people can create together. I'll definitely come again next year."

– Amadeo Quiros

Crafting robust mechanisms of civic engagement isn't merely a choice, but an imperative to uphold the pillars of the rule of law and democracy. These mechanisms serve as the lynchpin between citizen voices and the corridors of power, fostering transparency, accountability, and an unwavering commitment to the ideals we hold dear.

In a world of constant flux, nurturing these channels is our compass to navigate the complexities and ensure that the collective heartbeat of a nation resonates through its governance.

– Tina Nabatchi

From the crucible of captivity, I've learned that even the darkest chains cannot shackle the spirit's yearning for freedom. Oppression may confine the body, but the indomitable will of humanity forever soars, unbound and resolute.

– Leopoldo Lopez

JOIN OUR MOVEMENT

Demo Lab invites you to be an integral part of our movement, contributing to the global shaping of the democracy of tomorrow.

We recognize that our mission's success hinges on the collective efforts of individuals who share our vision. By becoming part of our movement, you stand alongside us in building a more inclusive and participatory democracy that resonates worldwide.

Why Your Participation Matters

At Demo Lab, we understand the power of unity and collaboration.

Every individual who joins us brings us one step closer to realizing our mission. Your involvement demonstrates a commitment to fostering positive change, influencing policies, and nurturing engaged citizenship.

Empower the Future

Your support fuels our initiatives, enabling us to create innovative programs, initiate crucial dialogues, and amplify the voices that often go unheard. Your belief in our cause serves as a driving force to empower the democracy of the future.

How You Can Contribute

There are many ways you can join our movement:

SPREAD AWARENESS: Share our mission and initiatives with your network to inspire more advocates for positive change.

PARTICIPATE: Engage in our projects, events, and discussions, lending your unique insights and perspectives.

SUPPORT FINANCIALLY: Your contributions help us sustain and expand our efforts, reaching more communities and creating greater impact.

COLLABORATE: Partner with us to initiate innovative projects that align with our vision of a more democratic and equitable future.

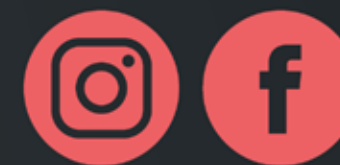
Together, We Shape Tomorrow

By joining Demo Lab's movement, you actively contribute to shaping a brighter future for societies worldwide.

We are immensely grateful for the support of individuals like you who believe in the potential of engaged citizens to transform our world.

Join us as we work together to forge a path towards a more inclusive, participatory, and just democracy for generations to come.

Ready to make a difference? Join our movement today



@demolabcr

Designed by
Gabriela Gamboa

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