

THE ROLE OF DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION IN HIGHLIGHTING THE REALITIES AND CHALLENGING THE MYTHS OF MIGRATION FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH TO THE GLOBAL NORTH

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Abstract: Though international migration is sometimes suggested as having the potential of propelling economic development and promoting multiculturalism in the world, there exists a certain ‘sedentary bias’ against the ‘irregular’ kind of international migrants. This is reflected in the increasing adoption of restrictive immigration policies by countries in the global North, as well as a discernible rise in anti-immigration attitudes among the populace of these countries. Many of these anti-migration attitudes are grounded in myths peddled by the media which feed into negative popular perceptions about immigration in the North. This article discusses how development education (DE) can challenge these myths and throw light on the realities of migration in the global South. From a world-systems’ perspective, the article goes on to explore how neoliberal globalisation and historical colonialism have contributed to creating the conditions that generate migrant flows from the global South to the North. Further situating the discussions within a DE discourse, the author uses critical and postcolonial theories to highlight how anti-immigration stereotypes and prejudice can be tackled in the global North.

Key Words: Migration; Immigration; Anti-migration; Colonialism; Globalisation; Development Education; Global South; Global North.

Introduction

International migration has been part of human history for many millennia, but the accelerated processes of globalisation and its associated impacts in recent years has given it a boost (Awumbila et al., 2008; Castles et al., 2005; Czaika and de Haas, 2014). As a result, international migration is receiving heightened attention and debate in government and international

development policy circles, especially in the global North (Chetail, 2008). There is now evidence to suggest that South-South migration is becoming a force to reckon with (Crush and Ramachandran, 2010; Cenker, 2015; Nawyn, 2016), though the direction of international migratory flows has usually been thought of as a predominantly South-North occurrence (Castles, 2004). According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA):

“nearly two thirds of international migrants live in Europe (76 million) or Asia (75 million). North America hosted the third largest number of international migrants (54 million), followed by Africa (21 million), Latin America and the Caribbean (9 million) and Oceania (8 million)” (UN-DESA, 2016:1).

Yet one irony that seems to characterise international migration is that, the more prominence it assumes in development discourse as an enabler of economic development (UN-DESA, 2016), the more anti-immigration sentiment appears to grow in the global North. The indignation surrounding immigration in Northern countries (Thorbjørnsrud, 2015), is evident in the havoc that the issue appears to be wreaking on the European Union project, owing to the contributory role it played in Britain’s decision to leave the European Union (EU) by referendum in June 2016, a process better known as ‘Brexit’ (Curtice, 2016; Hakimi, 2016). Immigration has also been used as a springboard in political propaganda by populist and far-right politicians in efforts to win elections in Europe and North America (Greven, 2016).

Consequently, irregular migrants who often live in Northern countries without requisite residency permits, are among the most marginalised and vulnerable groups in those societies. They often face all kinds of human rights violations, discrimination and exploitation in the work place as well as incarceration and forceful repatriation back to the very danger they escaped in the first place, sometimes without regard to their legal refugee status (UN-DESA, 2016; Rwamatwara, 2005). Bakewell (2008) traces the anti-immigration attitudes towards this group to the colonial period, which he calls ‘sedentary bias’; the assumption that migration of the

poor and unskilled is a bad thing because they are a threat to development and should stay at home. The unwelcoming attitudes in some societies in the global North are often founded on myths, but also sometimes based on the negative realities that immigration appears to have on such societies. The myths include the loss of jobs to immigrants, insecurity seen in rising cases of terrorism, and a watering down of Western liberal values, among others (Castles, 2002; Cenker, 2015; Attinà, 2016). Even within some government policy circles in the North, immigration is perceived to be a bad thing. This is demonstrated in the increasing adoption of restrictive immigration policies, as well as development of aid packages directed to migrant-sending and transiting countries in the global South, intended to create better economic conditions that will minimise emigration from these countries (Castles, 2010). The assumptions that underlie these anti-immigration attitudes are held with little consideration of the complex push factors, embedded in the colonial histories and encounters of the countries of the global South, as well as the impact of the current ordering of the global capitalist economy.

This article looks at the issue of international migration under the lens of development education (DE) with the aim of challenging the myths often associated with immigration in the global North. DE as a field of study is arguably ‘the only strand of education that organises itself around North-South relations and therefore is located right in the middle of local-global processes and debates’ (Andreotti, 2007: 2). It is driven by a social justice agenda for the most marginalised and disenfranchised of the world (Skinner et al., 2013). In doing this, DE takes an historical and global view of development processes and points out how these processes impact on the lives of the marginalised and poor, while offering a vision of what a just, equal, and dignifying world should be like for all.

The article briefly discusses some contemporary realities of migration in the global South vis-à-vis the global North in terms of the scale of migration, and in the second section discusses a number of global economic and political drivers of international migration set within the neoliberal global order. Section three then analyses how the historical

epochs of the colonial era and slave trade have contributed to shaping migration from the South to the North. The last section looks at how DE in the field of educational practice and non-governmental organisation (NGO) campaign activities in the global North can challenge the myths around migrants and immigration. Though the broader discussions in the paper touch on the global South, specific references are made to sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa regions.

The realities of migration in the global South

Until recently, global research and policy on international migration has focused more on, and predominantly portrayed international migration as a South-North phenomenon, much to the neglect of South-South migration (Bakewell, 2009; Nawyn, 2016). One of the reasons for the lack of attention given to South-South migration in international migration research over the years has been the absence of reliable data on human mobility between countries of the South (Solimano, 2015). This situation is changing, however, as research on international migration points to South-South migration becoming dominant (Abel and Sander, 2014; Solimano, 2015; Nawyn, 2016). The facilitating factors that account for increased migration between countries of the global South, according to Solimano (2015:12) relate to ‘closer geographical proximity, cultural similarity and the existence of more open migration policies compared with the migration regimes prevailing in high income nations’. Geographical proximity in particular is an important facilitating factor as migration is noted to occur more between countries located within the same geographical region (UN, 2015). Furthermore, the inability of migrants in Southern countries to bear high costs associated with travelling to the North, as well as the desire to live in close proximity to their families also account for the increasing trends in South-South migration (Ozkul and Obeng-Odoom, 2013).

The rise in South-South migration notwithstanding, media reportage and popular opinion in the western world continue to hype and portray South-North migration in largely negative terms, constituting an ‘invasion’ of Europe and other parts of the global North by migrants from the global South

(de Haas, 2008; Beyer and Matthes, 2015). This negative portrayal feeds into anti-immigration attitudes in western democracies, as there is ample evidence to suggest that the majority of citizens in these countries are in favour of more restrictive immigration policies than current migration regimes enforce (Freeman et al., 2013; Thorbjørnsrud, 2015).

The notion of a large number of migrants from the global South ‘invading’ Europe, for example, is often linked to the portrayal of origin countries in the global South as places of ‘war and poverty’, which force people to flee in search of security and wellbeing in the North (de Haas, 2008). Though conflict and poverty drive some of the migration flows from the South, these do not constitute the sum of the causal factors that underlie migration from these areas. There is also ‘healthy’ migration between countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and even from most countries in the South to the North, driven by more positive factors such as trade, education, work and social factors such as marriage (Bakewell, 2009). It is instructive to note that, even for migration flows caused by conflict and war in southern countries, the bulk of such flows end up in neighbouring countries of the South. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2015 mid-year report: ‘Sub-Saharan Africa is host to the largest number of refugees (4.1 million), followed by Asia and Pacific (3.8 million), Europe (3.5 million), and the Middle East and North Africa (3.0 million)’ (UNHCR, 2015a).

The UNHCR has also reiterated the fact that about 86 percent of refugees are hosted by countries in the developing regions of the world (UNHCR, 2015b). Yet these countries in the South which host the majority of the refugee population around the world, lack the capacity and infrastructure to absorb large refugee populations into their countries. This has led to a situation where many refugees in these countries live in deplorable conditions, as attested by a UNHCR report which found that, ‘86% of Syrian refugees in Jordan and 70% in Lebanon are living below the poverty line’ (UNHCR; cited in Metcalfe-Hough, 2015: 3). Another report produced by the World Economic Forum confirms this fact by noting that,

‘Most forced migrants move to other developing countries, where social and governance systems may already be weak or likely to fail’ (World Economic Forum, 2016: 15). The report further notes that, according to UN estimates, the cost of housing Syrian refugees in Jordan is over seven percent of Jordanian Gross Domestic Product (GDP), revealing the toll that the Syrian refugee crisis has had on a neighbouring country in the global South.

The argument above is not intended to dismiss the fact that there has been a sharp increase in the numbers of migrants travelling from the global South to the North. The current refugee crisis in Europe as a result of the conflict in Syria and other conflicts in the Middle-East and North Africa is evidence of the magnitude of migratory flows into Europe. In 2015 alone, it was estimated that more than a million migrants and refugees crossed the Mediterranean into Europe (Hakimi, 2016). International migration, therefore, is a global phenomenon and part of the processes of globalisation, and the ‘undesirable’ forms of it, expressed in refugee movements not only affect the global North, but Southern countries too.

Whichever destinations migrants from the global South end up in, whether in neighbouring countries in the South or in the global North, one undisputable fact is that, their movement is driven by a multiplicity of factors grounded in historical and current global economic and political processes, as well as socio-cultural and ecological factors (Attinà, 2016; Bakewell, 2009). The next two sections look at how global and historical forces have contributed to shaping contemporary migration from the South to the North.

Neoliberalism and migration

International migration by its very definition occurs across borders of different countries, but Castles (2004: 210-211) has suggested that, ‘Today, the most crucial borders are not between nation-states, but those between North and South’. Castles clarifies his assertion by noting that, as a political and social terminology, the North-South divide is used to represent the increasing disparities in economic, social, and political developments between two broad regions of the world. The global North is used to

designate the developed countries of North America, Western Europe, Japan and Oceania, while the global South represents the developing regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The disparities in development between these two broad regions, according to Castles, are generated partly by the increasing processes of globalisation, the persistence of which create the push factors that compel people to migrate from the global South to the North in search of better economic prospects, human security and personal liberty (ibid).

Generally, the impact of globalisation is felt in most parts of the world and in various spheres of human endeavour. In countries of the global South, globalisation can be credited with many important benefits: the opening up of developing countries to the gains of international trade; improved standards of living and life expectancy of people across the developing world; access to new technologies, skills and knowledge from the developed world; and access to markets in developed countries though limited, access to foreign aid which has brought with it many development projects (Stiglitz, 2003).

But a closer look at the processes of globalisation shows that the benefits of globalisation are sometimes overstated, given their harsh effects in the global South. Key elements of globalisation such as trade liberalisation and privatisation have often led to the marginalisation of the poor in the global South who mostly lack the capacity to compete for the benefits of open markets, whilst destroying the livelihoods of local farmers and fishermen (Guttal, 2007). Akokpari (2000: 81) has captured the impact of globalisation on farming in the developing world by noting that:

“Liberalisation and the expansion of the free market which are central doctrines of globalization, have also rendered farming, the predominant occupation of rural dwellers, an (a) non-competitive and a generally unattractive enterprise as imported agriculture products have become cheaper than the locally produced. This is in

turn a direct consequence of the ubiquitous de-subsidisation policies which affected agriculture inputs, including fertilisers”.

The rise of multinational corporations as part of the processes of globalisation has contributed to irregular migration. Globalisation with its neoliberal expansionist agenda has promoted the flourishing of multinational corporations and extended their reach and impact to the remotest parts of the globe (Guttal, 2007). As Wickramasekara (2009: 27) rightly observes, ‘The phenomenon of irregular migration is also traceable to outsourcing of productions operations under globalisations forces’. In developed countries, there has risen a group of ‘labour brokers’ who facilitate the movement of irregular migrants to Northern countries and outsource their labour to corporations and companies as business (ibid). In developing countries, these corporations, source, operate and thrive on cheap labour and in the process, out-compete local businesses and destroy the natural resource base of local economies (Ahiakpor, 1992).

A significant underlying factor for forced migration in the global South is armed conflict, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa. This fact is underscored in a UNHCR report, which notes that: ‘In addition to the Syrian crisis, the outbreak of armed conflict or deterioration of ongoing ones in Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Ukraine, among others have contributed to prevailing trends’ in refugee crises (UNHCR, 2015a: 4).

The current immigration crises in Europe and North America can therefore be directly linked to ‘violence and civil wars in North Africa, the Middle East, and other parts of the Arab world and the stateless status of large areas of Africa’ (Attinà, 2016: 17). These armed conflicts and civil wars which contribute to the refugee drive to Europe and North America have their roots in a global political economy as part of a post-modern era, which allows the most powerful countries and international institutions in the world to interfere, influence and direct the political and economic affairs of

poorer and weaker states. Moore (2000:17) gives a description of post-modernism in relation to Africa to highlight some of the interesting ways that the neoliberal global order contributes to foment conflict and war in Africa:

“A world in which state boundaries are falling down, structural adjustment policies have deprived state-makers and nation builders of the means to forge coalitions and ameliorate threats from pretenders to power, warlords have better links with global corporations and more efficient tax collection agencies than do putative politicians, ‘retraditionalisation’ reinvents latent ethnic identities, armies are replaced by ostensibly clean mercenary organisations while other soldiers and rebels change identities daily (the Sierra Leonean term ‘sobel’ captures the confusion of the people terrorized by armed youths who may be soldiers by day and rebels by night), and NGOs do the jobs that used to be carried out by more formal organisations such as states and official international agencies”.

In protesting and resisting stringent immigration policies in the global North, immigrants have demonstrated a knowledge of how the global capitalist system and unfavourable development cooperation policies of Northern countries have contributed to create the conditions that force them to flee their home countries. A good case is the ‘Caravan Hunger Strike’ that migrants organised during a G7 Summit hosted in Cologne, Germany in 1999. The grim banner under which this demonstration was held was ‘We are here because you destroy our countries’ (Nyers, 2003:1081), which speaks volumes of how the failures of the international system and policies of Northern countries contribute to the migration flows from the South.

Globalisation therefore has been a huge facilitating factor for international migration, because globalisation itself involves the movement of goods, services and people across transnational borders. In this sense, there is a reinforcing relationship between globalisation and migration, with each acting to reinforce the other, leading to a process Munck (2008:1229) has called the ‘globalization of migration’. This not only involves economic globalisation, but also entails the movement of people along with their

cultures and ideas (Castles, 2002). With this understanding, the push back on international migration, especially within government circles in Northern countries, appears to be inconsistent with the tenets of an open world. This is what Munck meant when he observed that, ‘Migration exposes a central inconsistency in neoliberal globalization because if capital, money, information and knowledge should all flow freely across the globe, then why not people?’ (2008:1227).

How Africa’s colonial/slave history has shaped migration to the global North

One of the lasting impacts of historical colonialism is that it established relations between the colonisers and the colonised (Amighetti and Nuti, 2016). These colonial relations flourished through migration to and from the colonies and the metropolises, and have persisted into modern times to give shape to the pattern of migration flows in Africa today (Amersfoort, 2008; Black et al, 2004 Castles, 2000). Migratory flows therefore follow the pattern of pre-existent historical and socio-economic links between originating and sending countries (Castles, 2000), coupled with other factors such as geographical nearness and economic prospects in destination countries (Amersfoort, 2008). As an illustration of how these colonial linkages work in sub-Saharan Africa, Black et al (2004:9) have noted that ‘Migration to Europe has traditionally followed old colonial linkages, with the bulk of West Africans in France coming from francophone countries, and those in the UK coming from Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia and Sierra Leone’. It should further be noted that the modern migration flows from francophone and anglophone sub-Saharan African countries to France and the UK respectively are also influenced by the convenience of language between these respective countries, made possible by the colonial connections.

The colonial project therefore thrived on movements between colonies and their metropolises in Europe and in the process produced ‘a multitude of mobilities across borders’ (Yeoh, 2003:373). In the current global order, these mobilities have continued and produced inequalities between the global South and North. The impact of colonialism on African

countries is not only seen in the patterns of African transnational migration today, but also in the underdevelopment and inequality that it produced (Said, 1989). Georgi and Schatral (2012:209) emphasise this point by noting that, 'today's inequality is the result of a history of conquest, colonialism and imperialism'.

The historical migration linkages even stretch back in time to the era of the slave trade under which Africans experienced a massive forced migration as part of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Under the arrangement of forced labour, Africans were made to work as domestic slaves, and in plantations and mines in the metropolises. The gains of the slave trade contributed to laying 'the foundation of the early development of the capitalist world economy...generating the profits that led to the great expansion of British capitalism and the financing of the Industrial Revolution' (Rwamatwara, 2005:178).

Within the framework of the past relations between countries of the global South and North established through the historical epochs of slave trade and colonial era, some authors (Amighetti and Nuti, 2016:541) have noted that 'the national identity of former colonizing nations cannot be understood in isolation from their ex-colonies'. Reasoning from this perspective and the role of the colonised in the development history of colonising nations, it is argued that postcolonial migrants should have the right of entry into their former colonising nations (ibid), based on the 'intertwining histories' the two share (Said, 1994).

The role of development education in challenging the myths associated with immigration in the global North

The stereotypes associated with migrant communities in Western societies today is palpable, especially within conservatist governments, among some of their indigenous citizenry, populist media and far-right politicians (Boucher, 2008). The situation is particularly worrying in the case of the media, given the important role they play in public awareness raising and

sensitisation. A report produced by the Global Commission on International Migration has reiterated the fact that:

“In many countries around the world, the situation of migrants in society has been jeopardized by media stories that portray members of the migrant and minority populations in the worst possible light: as criminals, terrorists, and more generally as people who represent a threat to the established way of life” (GCIM, 2005:52).

Among the many myths that contribute to anti-immigration attitudes in Northern countries, a few notable ones are that, immigration undermines western identities and values, and leads to the clash of civilisations; immigration has a toll on the economies, and over-burdens the welfare systems of host countries; increasing unemployment in host countries as a result of loss of jobs to immigrants; immigrants are responsible for the increasing crime rates in host countries, including terrorism (Bianchi, Buonanno and Pinotti, 2012; Think Global, 2016; Attinà, 2016).

A close examination of any one of the above myths associated with immigration will reveal that they are founded on anecdotal evidence at best (Bove and Böhmelt, 2016), a situation where isolated incidences of these myths are used to generalise and justify anti-immigration attitudes. Taking the myth that immigration is responsible for high crime rates in host countries into consideration, as for example in cases of terrorism. Though a recent upsurge in terrorism cases are perhaps a confirmation of some of the fears that people in Western societies harbour, a close look at reported cases of terrorism shows that, most of these are perpetrated by individuals born in host countries or travel on different visas to host countries, and not refugees or immigrants (Nowrasteh, 2016). This fact is evident, for example, in a policy analysis on migration and terrorism produced by the Cato Institute which discovered that, in the United States:

“From 1975 through 2015 the chance of an American being murdered by a foreign-born terrorist was 1 in 3,609,709 in a year...the chance of an American being killed in a terrorist attack

committed by a refugee was 1 in 3.64 billion a year” (Nowrasteh, 2016: 2).

Most of the stereotypes that migrants face are founded on assumptions associated with incidence of terrorism, rise in unemployment, diminishing welfare opportunities for the citizenry of Northern countries, and other developments that can be linked to globalisation and the 2008 global financial crisis (Castles, 2002; Busch, 2010; Cenker, 2015; Attinà, 2016).

The development education sector has an important role to play in diffusing the prejudice and stereotypes that hang around migrant communities in the North. Though DE in the global North has over the years focused on campaigns on poverty and underdevelopment in the global South, some authors have been critical of its limited approach to charity and awareness raising, calling for more critical approaches (Andreotti, 2006; Bryan, 2011; Selby and Kagawa, 2011). Andreotti (2006), for example has made the case for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) to move from ‘soft’ to ‘critical’ forms, with the difference rooted in whether such citizenship education is grounded in critical and postcolonial considerations.

DE school learning activities and NGO campaign activities should therefore be underpinned by critical theory. In Andreotti’s (2006:49) view, critical theory has the potential of empowering people to reflect and understand the ‘epistemological and ontological assumptions’ that they often associate with others and themselves. Within a framework of critical citizenship education, learning and campaign activities should highlight the permeability of all cultures and citizenship beyond national polities. According to Edward Said (1989: 225), this approach to citizenship education has the potential of making people in destination countries, ‘see Others not as ontologically given but as historically constituted’, and furthermore give them the option to see cultures either ‘as zones of control or of abandonment, of recollection or of forgetting, of force or of dependence, of exclusiveness or of sharing, all taking place in the global history’. Said (1989: 225) further notes that the experiences of immigration and the

crossing of borders present an opportunity for people to conceive and construct new and varied narratives of citizenship that transcends narrow ethnocentrism, which can help ‘erode the exclusivist biases we so often ascribe to cultures, our own not least’. The stereotypes associated with migrants from the global South partly stem from a lack of appreciation of the historical and contemporary roots of the conditions that force migrants to move from their home countries, and therein lies the usefulness of post-colonial theory. A post-colonial lens on the issue of international migration is significant in its capacity to locate the root causes of migrant flight within the prism of the impacts of colonialism and neoliberal globalisation.

A key myth-making element around immigration in the North, usually peddled by the media, is the high and sometimes false numbers often associated with the influx of refugees and asylum seekers into Europe and North America (Think Global, 2016). These high figures which are often cited out of the context of global migration scales and patterns contribute to stoking fears among the general populace, since this usually creates the picture of migrants from the global South ‘invading’ Northern countries (de Haas, 2008). It is therefore important for DE campaign activities in the North to change perceptions around the actual numbers involved in immigration while also situating these numbers in the context of global migration flows.

The involvement of immigrants in DE campaign activities in Northern countries will go a long way to change the negative perceptions around them. DE campaign activities should provide the platform for immigrants to tell their own stories, while also using the profiles of prominent immigrants who have contributed positively to developing Northern societies to build trust between migrant and indigenous communities. An exemplary DE campaign which uses this approach is the ‘I am an immigrant’ campaign promoted by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) which provided immigrants with a ‘voice to highlight the importance of their contribution to society and to demonstrate that they were part of the fabric of the British society’ (JCWI, 2016:8).

Another effective means of managing the migration crises is for the international system to work towards reducing global inequality between the global South and North (Castles, 2004). The DE sector through NGO activities should promote campaigns that focus on dismantling the structural and systemic causes of poverty in the global South that have links to neoliberal globalisation and development cooperation policies of Northern countries. Such advocacy activities should throw light on how the different manifestations of the neoliberal status quo are contributing to forced migration from the South (Tsimouris, 2014).

Conclusion

A discovery of how the neoliberal global order contributes to the current international migration crises should not lead to a retreat from globalisation, since globalisation carries enormous benefits in its fold (Stiglitz, 2007). Such a realisation should not lead to a tightening of border controls or the institution of unfavourable immigration regimes which subject migrants to dehumanising conditions. An understanding of how the historical epochs of slavery and colonialism have contributed to shaping migration patterns and produced inequality today should not lead to aid packages directed at countries in the global South, meant to cause a cessation of migratory flows from these countries. These policy measures in Northern countries, as far as they have been implemented, have not achieved their desired results but instead resulted in more human suffering through trafficking and smuggling (de Haas, 2008; Rother, 2013; Sørensen, 2012).

This article has argued that migratory flows from the global South to North can positively impact on migrants and their host societies. A UN-DESA report on migration found that, ‘When supported by appropriate policies, migration can contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development in both home and host communities’ (UN-DESA, 2016:2). A coordinated effort is therefore required by both home and host countries in the pursuit of policies and programmes that do not solely focus on stopping migration from Southern countries, but that seek to develop the capabilities of people in home countries as well as migrants in destination

countries within a human rights framework (Preibisch et al., 2016). This will go a long way to guarantee a migration drive from the global South that is not precipitated by a situation of poverty, conflict and political persecution, but one that is motivated by a mutual interest to exchange labour, ideas and cultures in a world that has become increasingly inter-connected. This will no doubt minimise the negative fallouts that irregular migration in particular, is so closely associated with in the global North. In developing and implementing such policies and programmes, public education is vital in challenging the myths that are often associated with immigration in Northern countries, and development education / Critical Global Citizenship Education have a central role to play in this respect.

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