

# Separate Spaces, Separate Outcomes? Neighborhood impacts on minorities in Germany

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## ABSTRACT

In both the German and American literature on ethnic neighborhoods, there is considerable debate as to whether living amongst co-ethnics hinders or furthers the integration process for immigrants<sup>1</sup>. Using the detailed data on immigrant integration in the German Socio-Economic Panel in combination with zip code level data on minority concentration and neighborhood income levels, the research tests the extent to which ethnic neighborhoods are economically, socially and/or culturally isolated spaces in Germany. The findings indicate that although general neighborhood quality indicators are lower for minorities living within ethnic neighborhoods, these persons are no more isolated from either Germans or their own cultural roots than their counterparts living outside these areas.

## INTRODUCTION

Approximately one in every ten German residents was born outside of the country or is the direct descendant of someone who migrated to Germany after 1955. Historically efforts were made to disperse this population across Germany's urban landscape in the hopes that this would prevent the sort of ethnic chasms from opening up that marked social topography of America. Now however researchers on both sides of the Atlantic increasingly call into question the assumption that living amongst one's co-ethnics makes it more difficult to become successfully integrated (e.g. Kapghan 1999 and Portes and Rumbaut 1996).

The aim of this research is therefore to address this debate by attempting to answer the question, 'how are minorities affected by living within ethnic neighborhoods in Germany?' In doing so, the work seeks to test three sets of theories that have been developed to explain how the presence of ethnic neighborhoods affects the

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<sup>1</sup> I use the terms 'immigrant', 'minority' and persons of 'foreign origin' interchangeably to refer to the population that migrated to Germany after 1955 and their descendants

social fabric of a region. The first body of literature is an outgrowth of the ecological tradition, which considers the spatial separateness of ethnic groups simply to be a reflection of their incomplete evolution towards a state of assimilation (e.g. Burgess 1925). While this body of research regards minority neighborhoods as temporary phenomena that will give way to the inevitable pressures of assimilation, a second strand of the literature argues instead that many ethnic neighborhoods are evolving into entrenched spaces of disadvantage. In this literature ethnic separation has a negative connotation; it represents unfilled potential, and is associated with isolation from mainstream social networks and opportunities. American research in this vein emphasizes the concern that segregated neighborhoods nurture a so-called 'culture of poverty' (e.g. Massey and Denton 1993). Within minority neighborhoods destructive behaviors arising from the concentration of unemployment are thought to drive away services and result in a dearth of positive role models to guide the youth in these areas. The German counterpart to this research tends to lean more towards the argument that spatial concentrations of minorities do not provide stepping stones to assimilation but instead foster cultural distinctiveness and in so doing, incite intolerance among Germans (e.g. Esser 1986).

The countervailing pluralist/multi-cultural body of literature insists that straight-line assimilation is neither inevitable, nor necessarily desirable. This third body of research emphasizes the fact that ethnic neighborhoods provide job and housing information, easier access to loans, as well as cultural and social support to ethnic group members (e.g. Calmore 1995, Dunn 1998, Kapphan 1999)

In the past, German policy makers have tended to subscribe to the exclusionary view of ethnic neighborhoods and have thus attempted to enact policies leading to ethnic dispersal (see Leitner 1987 and Arin 1991 for a discussion). The following section discusses how this political agenda has interacted with the three major waves of migration to Germany since 1960.

## THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

When guestworkers first began arriving during the 1960s, much of this population settled into barracks provided to them by their employers. Temporary housing sufficed so long as this population viewed its stay in Germany as transitory, but contracts were extended, families brought over and immigrants wanting to establish homes moved out into the general housing market. This was particularly the case after the *Anwerbstop* in 1973 when the worker recruitment programs ended but workers continued to be allowed to bring their families over to Germany.

Like immigrants everywhere, guestworkers moved into low quality housing no longer acceptable to most of the German population. In contrast to the United States, where immigrants have contended with a largely private housing market and little control over their settlement patterns, the German State has tended to enact measures in an attempt to forcibly desegregate the minority population (Rist 1978). These measures included formal settlement bans to certain cities and particular neighborhoods within these cities as well as more informal measures, such as limiting the number of social housing units allocated to minorities.

Despite the settlement bans, persons of foreign origin continued to move into neighborhoods already containing large concentrations of non-citizens. After the formal settlement bans were lifted in 1989, desegregation measures continued on an informal basis (Häußermann and Kapphan 2000). For example social housing administrators, required to allocate a certain percentage of their units to foreigners, often used the set percentage as a cap above which they accepted no addition foreign households.

After the wall came down the composition of immigrant flows changed significantly. From 1989 onward, many of the migrants to Germany were *Aussiedler* (persons of German descent who until that time had been living in the former Soviet

Union, primarily in Russia, Romania and Kazakstan). Because access to German citizenship is based primarily on ancestry as opposed to place of residence, these newcomers had all the rights of German citizens. In addition, they had access to language courses, occupational training programs as well as subsidized housing (Seifert 1996).

Most cities in present day western Germany are multi-cultural landscapes where as many as 3 in ten residents have no German citizenship. Are the neighborhoods where many of these people live really spaces of alienation? To what extent might persons of foreign descent actually benefit from living within these areas? Three research hypotheses designed to directly address these questions are used to guide the ensuing analysis:

1. Immigrants and their descendents living within ethnic neighborhood live in a poorer quality environment than those who do not
2. Immigrants and their descendents who live within ethnic neighborhoods are more alienated from Germans and German culture
3. Immigrants and their descendents who live within ethnic neighborhoods possess more cultural capital.

The detailed data from the German Socio-Economic Panel discussed in the next section make it possible to answer these questions in a rather thorough fashion thus elucidating the extent to which the theories discussed in the first section apply to the German context.

## **DATA**

The German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP) is a rich source of information on a wide array of socioeconomic characteristics of approximately 6,000 randomly sampled households. The panel lends itself particularly well to the analysis of the minority population in Germany because of the large immigrant sub-sample in the GSOEP. Initially in 1984, 1393 households of Turkish, Yugoslavian, Greek, Spanish and Italian

origin were included in the sample. In 1994/1995, an additional immigrant sample of 522 households who moved from abroad to Germany was added to the GSOEP. These households were comprised of a large number of persons of German descent (*Aussiedler*) as well as of immigrants from all over the world, including the former guestworker-sending countries. As a result, the GSOEP captures a broad spectrum of immigrant experiences within Germany.

The analysis also makes use of the recently released zip code identifiers available to researchers working within the German Institute for Economic Research. The zip code information in the GSOEP was matched with zip code level measures of foreign concentration and a binary variable to distinguish low-income neighborhoods. The measures for level of foreigner concentration were obtained from the city statistical offices for Germany's 20 largest cities and these data were combined with micro-marketing data purchased from the company Geo-Infas. The low-income neighborhood information based on tax and state statistical office data was also obtained from Geo-Infas.

## **VARIABLES**

The analysis contains a number of variables whose definitional boundaries have been the subject of considerable debate in earlier research. The first of these is what the analysis refers to as the 'foreign-origin' population. This group includes all persons who arrived in Germany after 1950, those who do not have German citizenship and persons whose parents immigrated after 1950. The analysis limits the sample to persons living in the former West-Germany as there are virtually no ethnic neighborhoods in the East. The goal was to incorporate as many of the immigrants arriving during the guestworker recruitment era and their descendents as possible.

While it would have been ideal to run the analysis on all of the national sub-groupings, samples sizes were prohibitively small. The decision was therefore made to distinguish two sub-populations in particular. The first delineation was between persons of Turkish-origin and all other groups. The reasoning for this is two-fold: First the

literature indicates that Turks have historically been the most disadvantaged nationality group within Germany (Seifert 1996). The second is that because Turks are the largest minority population in Germany, this means their sub-sample is the largest within the GSOEP and their level of wellbeing has a pronounced effect upon German society as a whole.

The second ethnic sub-population singled out by the analysis is the *Aussiedler*. Because this population has access to better services and housing by virtue of their German citizenship and a strong sense of German identity stemming from their German ancestry, their patterns of integration vary substantially from those of the former guestworker population. The criteria used to identify them within the analysis include country of origin in the former Soviet Union and current possession of German citizenship.

The second set of variables with controversial boundaries is the categories and scales used to delineate neighborhoods. The analysis sets the scale of neighborhood boundaries at the zip code level. Zip codes have the disadvantage that they vary in spatial size and population. However unlike American census tracts, zip code boundaries tend to match those commonly assumed to delineate neighborhoods, so much so that certain neighborhoods in Berlin are known by the last two digits of their pre-1993 local zip code. In total there are about seven thousand zip codes in all of Germany, two hundred and fifty in all of Berlin, and eight in Kreuzberg. Zip code areas generally contain around 10,000 persons.

Ethnic concentrations are defined based on the percentage of persons without German citizenship living within them. The data for these figures was obtained from city statistical offices for the 20 largest German cities and for less urbanized areas, data was purchased from Geo-Infas, a micro-marketing data firm that bases its calculations on state statistical office and telephone book data. Ethnic neighborhoods were defined on the basis of comparisons between subjective evaluations of whether or not a neighborhood had 'many foreigners' living in it and the official statistics on the national make-up of the

neighborhood. The results reveal that 25% non-citizen is the most advantageous level at which to distinguish ethnic neighborhoods as this is the level of concentration at which a clear majority felt they were living in a neighborhood with 'many foreigners'.

Because there is considerable debate in the literature as to whether the disadvantages experienced by persons living in ethnic neighborhoods are externalities produced by race or income, a binary variable identifying zip code areas as either low income/not low income was created. This data was then divided up by region, ranked and then the bottom 15% of those neighborhoods was designated as 'poor'. A relative as opposed to absolute measures of poverty was chosen because there are strong regional variations in purchasing power such that lower-middle income neighborhoods in Berlin are on par with lower income neighborhoods in Frankfurt.

Neighborhoods were also classified as urban, suburban or rural. These distinctions are important because while there is less crowding in rural areas, minorities living there are likely to be more isolated from ethnic communities. Suburban areas contain a heterogeneous population in Germany because this is where both single family homes and large housing estates are concentrated. The breakdown between these areas was made by designating neighborhoods in Germany's twenty largest cities as either urban or suburban and the rest of the neighborhoods as rural. The delineation between urban and suburban largely follows the distinctions made by the German postal service.

A number of individual variables were included in the analysis in order to control for factors influencing housing access and belonging in order to facilitate the isolation of neighborhood effects. Net household income was included as this effects access to quality housing and past research has found connection between income and feelings of belonging (Barstow, K. et al 2000). The log of income was included because, for example, an additional 1000DM per month has a much greater effect on the well being of a family currently netting only 1500 DM per month as opposed to one that was already netting 5000DM. Household size was included because past research indicates that larger households have a more difficult time finding housing in Germany (Frick 1995).

Education was included to serve as a proxy for class while tenure was brought in as a proxy for wealth and hence ability to buy into better neighborhoods. Finally the research controls for era of migration to Germany by comparing those who arrived 1974-1989 (the post *Anwerbstop* pre- Post-Soviet era migrants), those who arrived after 1989 and those born in Germany with those who arrived between 1950 and 1973 during the guestworker recruitment phase.

## RESULTS

### A. Summary statistics

One of the primary factors thought to contribute to a ‘culture of poverty’ within ethnic neighborhoods is it assumed that this is where persons without employment and with lower levels of education are concentrated. Summary statistics for education and unemployment measures reveal that although persons of foreign origin living within ethnic neighborhoods appear on average to be slightly less educated, the differences between the two populations are not statistically significant. This is important because it means that defining aspects of the culture of poverty don’t appear to be more prevalent among those living within ethnic neighborhoods. However there is a large and significant income difference between the two populations. The net household income difference can probably largely be explained by the greater labor force participation rates of women living outside concentrations.

**Tables 1: Income and education by neighborhood**

	Within ethnic concentrations	Outside ethnic concentrations
<b>Years of education</b>	10.1	10.7
<b>% with university degree</b>	5.7	6.8
<b>% left school w/no degree</b>	19.7	18.9
<b>% unemployment</b>	10.5	9.0
<b>Net monthly income in DM</b>	3207*	4086*

\* indicates that differences between the two populations are significant at the .05 level.

## B. Models

The minority population living within ethnic neighborhoods differs from the minority population living outside these areas in terms of income (as shown above) as well as era of arrival and ethnic composition (Drever 2002). In light of these variations it seems clear that any further comparison between measures associated with ‘integration’ by neighborhood make-up could be confounded by factors such as the high percentage of Turkish persons and weaker socioeconomic position of those living there.<sup>2</sup>

The analysis therefore uses logistic regression to strategically distill ethnic concentration effects from a range of factors that could be driving differences in neighborhood quality, integration, and ties to country of origin culture. The regression analyses are grouped into three sections according to the hypothesis they address. Further different sets of independent variables are used in each section to control for relevant confounding influences.

### Neighborhood and housing quality

The first hypothesis the analysis addresses is that the general quality of the neighborhood environment is lower within areas of ethnic concentration. This hypothesis addresses directly the assumption laid out in the exclusion literature that living within an ethnic neighborhood is an obstacle towards achieving a satisfactory standard of living. Tested are whether or not living within an ethnic neighborhood results in isolation from services, greater fear of crime, lower quality housing and a lower standard of living.

**Table 2: Neighborhood quality**

	Very satisfied with neighborhood	Very satisfied with access to goods and services	Very worried about crime
<b>Inside concentration</b>	.235*	.652	1.227
<b>Low income neigh</b>	.959	1.114	.926
<b>Suburban vs. Urban</b>	1.976*	.727	1.606*

<sup>2</sup> One could certainly debate the direction of causality with regard to income (i.e. poorer people tend to live in ethnic neighborhoods vs. living within an ethnic neighborhood results in impoverishment). The analysis includes income among the independent variables because if there are significant race effects even after controlling for income this is especially meaningful.

<b>Rural vs. Urban</b>	2.001*	833	1.376
<b>Pseudo R square</b>	.0481	.0038	.0033
<b>Prov&gt;chi2</b>	.0000	.3252	.2536
<b>Number of observations</b>	2062	4897	7492
<b>Year(s)</b>	1994	1998,1999	1997,1998,1999

In the first set of analyses, perceptions of overall neighborhood quality are the outcome variables. Neighborhood location with respect to urban centers, neighborhood income level and whether or not the neighborhood is more than 25% non-citizen are the independent variables. Whether or not a group lives within a low-income neighborhood has a large and significant influence on neighborhood satisfaction. Further, busy central city neighborhoods made up of older housing stock seem to be less desirable than less crowded, more recently formed suburbs or less urban areas. Satisfaction with access to goods and services appears not to be captured by the broad neighborhood categories included in the analysis. Further, in contrast to findings for some minority neighborhoods in the US, persons in minority neighborhoods in Germany are not significantly less satisfied with their access to goods and services, a likely reflection of the thriving ethnic economies in many of Germany's inner city ethnic neighborhoods. And finally, despite the criminal reputation of a number of ethnic neighborhoods in Germany, residents of ethnic concentrations are no more likely to be concerned about crime.

The low-income neighborhood variable was insignificant in two of the three models here, and continues to be in many of the analyses that follow. This is likely to do with the heterogeneity of German housing stock and the fact that poorer neighborhoods tend to be located near commercial city centers.

The next set of logistic regression models focus on the scale of the home as opposed to the neighborhood. This shift in scale requires additional variables to control for personal characteristics that impact access to quality housing. Net family income is therefore included, as is the log of net family income. The *Aussiedler* variable was included as it separates those immigrants who were given citizen status upon arrival and thus received preferential access to subsidized housing. Larger households have

historically had a more difficult time finding housing in Germany (Frick 1995) as have Turkish households (Gans 1987). Finally tenure was included because those who have accumulated the financial means to own their own homes have access to a much greater portion of the better quality housing stock than do renters.

**Table 3: Satisfaction with standard of living**

	Very satisfied with domicile	Very satisfied with standard of living	Worried about losing dwelling
<b>Inside concentration</b>	.729	.501*	1.030
<b>Low income neigh</b>	.969	1.418	.869
<b>Suburban vs. Urban</b>	1.732*	1.586	.769
<b>Rural vs. Urban</b>	1.893*	1.359	.863
<b>Income</b>	.99998	.99991	.99998*
<b>Log of income</b>	2.019*	2.874*	.8674
<b>Household size</b>	.877*	.828*	1.266*
<b>Turkish</b>	.818	.707	1.044
<b>Aussiedler</b>	1.469*	1.103	1.470*
<b>Owner</b>	3.611*	1.480*	.576*
<b>Pseudo R square</b>	.0782	.0424	.0458
<b>Prov&gt;chi2</b>	.0000	.0000	.0000
<b>Number of observations</b>	7160	7175	4897
<b>Year(s)</b>	1997,1998,1999	1997.1998,1999	1997, 1998

Most of the variables one would expect to be associated with domicile satisfaction were indeed significant. However, after controlling for other factors related to domicile satisfaction, living in a segregated neighborhood no longer had a significant effect on domicile quality. Further, minorities living within ethnic neighborhoods were not more likely to fear losing their dwelling. This indicates that they are no longer more likely to be concentrated in the generally dilapidated housing about to undergo urban renewal. Persons of foreign origin living within segregated neighborhoods were significantly more likely to feel that their standard of living was being compromised though.

### **Cultural alienation**

The second research hypothesis is that persons living within ethnic neighborhoods feel more alienated from German society as a whole than do persons of foreign origin living outside these areas.

**Table 4: Distance from Germans**

	Do not feel at all German	Feel disadvantaged due to ethnicity	Unlikely to apply for citizenship
<b>Inside concentration</b>	1.146	.606	1.342
<b>Low income neigh</b>	.517*	1.353	.894
<b>Turkish</b>	1.680*	.808	.365*
<b>Aussiedler</b>	.010*	.931	
<b>Years of education</b>	.854*	.972	.9997
<b>Income</b>	.99998	.99993	1.0000
<b>Log of income</b>	1.301*	1.707	.862
<b>Arrived 1974-1989 vs 1950-1973</b>	1.039	1.562	.515*
<b>Arrived 1990-1999 vs. 1950-1973</b>	2.821*	3.209*	.442*
<b>Born in Germany vs. 1950-1973</b>	.359	1.686	.395
<b>Suburban vs. Urban</b>	.676	.682	.755
<b>Rural vs. Urban</b>	.981	.781	1.109
<b>Pseudo R square</b>	.1471	.0399	.0655
<b>Prov&gt;chi2</b>	0000	.0263	.0000
<b>Number of observations</b>	2150	2031	1915
<b>Year(s)</b>	1997	1999	1996

	Visited Germans in the past year	Planning to remain in Germany	Speak German well or very well
<b>Inside concentration</b>	.770	1.198	1.100
<b>Low income neigh</b>	1.277	1.482	.779
<b>Turkish</b>	.521*	.874*	.404*
<b>Aussiedler</b>	1.700*	13.376*	1.161
<b>Years of education</b>	1.194*	1.038	1.186*
<b>Income</b>	.9994	.99985	1.000
<b>Log of income</b>	1.131	1.315	1.197
<b>Arrived 1974-1989 vs 1950-1973</b>	.688	1.552*	1.086
<b>Arrived 1990-1999 vs. 1950-1973</b>	.717*	2.671*	.6066*
<b>Born in Germany vs. 1950-1973 arriv</b>	4.64*	2.489	9.464*
<b>Suburban vs. Urban</b>	.660	1.357	1.144
<b>Rural vs. Urban</b>	.717	1.502*	.844
<b>Pseudo R square</b>	.0762	.1181	.1591
<b>Prov&gt;chi2</b>	.0000	.0000	.0000
<b>Number of observations</b>	2158	5944	3996
<b>Year(s)</b>	1997	1997,1998,1999	1997,1999

The analyses reveal a number of very interesting trends. First, after other factors are controlled for, in none of the models is living within an ethnic neighborhood significant. Instead, the strongest predictor of cultural distance is whether or not a migrant is of Turkish or German origin. The perception that living within an ethnic neighborhood makes integration more difficult is at least in part due to the greater concentration of persons of Turkish origin there as opposed to ethnic neighborhood externalities impeding the integration process.

Second, the analysis reveals interesting relationships between length of stay relationship to German society. As one would expect, more recent arrivals tend to be less integrated and foreign nationals born in Germany are much more likely to speak German well and have visited Germans in the past year than their parent's generation. Recent arrivals, however, are more likely to be planning to remain in Germany than those who arrived decades previously.

Personal and neighborhood income had little effect on interaction with German society, except with regard to feeling a sense of being German, indicating that there is a class aspect associated with this. Along the same lines, higher levels of education appeared to reduce cultural distance in a number of areas.

Living outside of central city areas where immigrants tend to cluster did not appear to have much of an impact except that minorities living in suburban areas are more likely to be planning to remain in Germany. This probably reflects the greater likelihood that suburbanites are homeowners.

**Table 5: Ethnic neighborhoods as reservoirs of cultural capital**

	Listen mostly to own national music	Read mostly own national newspaper	Value Religion highly	Eat mostly own national food
<b>Inside concentration</b>	1.637	.1.589	1.488	.880
<b>Low income neigh</b>	.730	.801	1.012	1.114
<b>Turkish</b>	3.065*	5.523*	2.214*	3.843*
<b>Aussiedler</b>	.386*	.233*	.636*	.535*
<b>Years of education</b>	.837*	.782*	.877*	.864*
<b>Income</b>	1.00002	1.000	1.0001	1.0002
<b>Log of income</b>	1.396	1.017	.718	.949
<b>Arrived 1974-1989 vs 1950-1973</b>	.768	.714	1.428	1.042
<b>Arrived 1990-1999 vs. 1950-1973</b>	.768	1.126	1.849*	1.211
<b>Born in Germany vs 1950-1973</b>	.272	.233*	.422*	.431*
<b>Suburban vs. Urban</b>	1.194	1.018	1.604	.821
<b>Rural vs. Urban</b>	1.697*	1.428	1.171	1.145
<b>Pseudo R square</b>	.1392	.1983	.0730	.1301
<b>Prov&gt;chi2</b>	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000
<b>Number of observations</b>	1942	1760	2269	1970
<b>Year</b>	1998	1998	1998	1998

Researchers on both sides of the Atlantic who view ethnic concentrations in a positive light argue that the clustering of co-ethnics aids in the preservation of national traditions. Being able to access cultural capital is thought to re-enforces self-worth and ease the transition to a new society. The analysis reveals, however that spatial proximity to co-ethnics does not increase the likelihood that a household will make efforts to preserve the culture of their country of origin.

Instead, as in the previous analysis, ethnic background is the most consistent predictor of cultural traditions. Turks as much more likely than other immigrant groups to practice their religion and culture and *Aussiedler* are much less likely. Surprisingly era of arrival is not a strong predictor, however generation is. Further, although income is not a strong predictor of cultural distance from country of origin, education is. Distance from

central city areas and therefore reduced access to the goods and institutions that make the preservation of traditions easier did not have an impact.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results reveal several important points. First, although minorities living within segregated neighborhoods are not as likely to be satisfied with their standard of living or surroundings, they were no more likely to feel isolated from goods and services, to feel concerned about crime or to be living in buildings on the verge of renovation. Therefore many of the critical aspects associated with the culture of poverty do not appear to have manifested within ethnic concentration within Germany. Further, once other factors are controlled for, persons living within ethnic neighborhoods are no more likely isolated from German society or to practice the culture of their country of origin.

So what does this mean for how we think about ethnic neighborhoods in Germany? First the perception that these spaces somehow nurture cultural difference appears to be driven by the fact that Germany's least integrated minority group has a higher probability of living within these spaces rather than by the fact that independent dynamics within ethnic neighborhoods are nurturing difference. Perceptions of isolation are also likely to be related to the overall lower neighborhood quality and lower standards of living that are experienced by persons living within these areas. These findings, along with those of previous research (Drever and Clark 2002), indicate that minorities tend to occupy some of Germany's most marginal housing. Policies aimed at improving overall neighborhood quality in ethnic neighborhoods would not only make a big difference in the lives of residents of these areas, but also alter how the rest of society thinks of these spaces.

Perhaps the most striking finding of the research is that living within an ethnic neighborhood does not impact a number of important aspects of the integration process. This re-enforces recent research in population geography (Zelinsky and Lee 1998, Wright and Ellis 2000) which argues that ethnic communities are held together by phone

lines and modern transportation systems as opposed to residential proximity. This is not to say, however that ethnic neighborhoods are not of vital importance to minority communities. But rather that their centrality in the lives of a growing number of minorities stems from the fact that the ethnic goods and services available within them are within driving as opposed to walking distance.

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