

TERRITORIES

Across Positionalities

IN

Roma, 2-3 febbraio 2023 | February 2nd-3rd 2023

TRANSITION

A cura di | Edited by
**Federico Brogginì, Amina Chouaïri, Pietro
Manaresi, Joan Martí Elias, Ana Scutari, and
Cédric Wehrle**

Il volume raccoglie i contributi presentati al seminario internazionale di dottorato “Across Positionalities”, organizzato dal gruppo FNRS “Territories in Transition” e ospitato il 2-3 febbraio 2023 presso il Dottorato in Architettura Città Paesaggio dell’Università Roma Tre. Il seminario ha riunito dottorandi e post-doc delle università partner attorno al tema della transizione nei territori contemporanei. Attraverso la condivisione di ricerche, metodi e riferimenti, l’incontro ha attivato un dialogo a più voci, volto a esplicitare posizionamenti critici e favorire apprendimento e disapprendimento collettivo.

This volume gathers contributions presented at the international PhD seminar “Across Positionalities,” organised by the FNRS group “Territories in Transition” and hosted on 2–3 February 2023 by the Architecture City Landscape Doctorate at Roma Tre University. The seminar brought together PhD candidates and post-doctoral researchers from partner institutions to reflect on transition in contemporary territories. Through the exchange of research progress, methods, and references, the meeting fostered a multi-voiced dialogue aimed at articulating critical positionalities and encouraging collective learning and unlearning.

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SOMMARIO | CONTENTS

- 12 Prefazione | Preface: Making room for emerging alternatives
Mauro Baioni
- 18 Part I: Cooperative City
Ana Scutari
- 22 01. The transition of EU mediterranean coastal cities towards sustainability: the role of European territorial cooperation projects
Federica Di Pietrantonio
- 40 02. Schools [not] dead. A collection of spatial elements and actions to design collectively directed scenarios in the indeterminacy of transition
Valentina Rossella Zucca
- 52 03. Towards a transition of housing from 'commodity' to 'commons': informal and cooperative niches in Belgrade
Maria Minić
- 66 04. Conflicts and integration of manufacturing spaces in metropolitan territories: an analysis of planning approaches in Brussels and Lille
Ana Scutari
- 84 05. Shaping the everyday city: Rome and the neighborhood public space
Francesca Paola Mondelli
- 94 Part II: Resourcing the City
Cédric Wehrle
- 98 06. Energy mapping: a way to territorialize and accidental transition
Fabrizio D'Angelo
- 114 07. Re-writing the city: Central Valley of Chile
Felipe Miño
- 132 08. Greening green infrastructure: community landscape and ecological continuity in the Metropolitan City of Rome
Carolina Pozzi

- 146 09. Mapping the spaces of automobility in the cityterritory: towards a new territorial project for the transition
Cédric Wehrle
- 160 10. Collateral mountains: the case of the Western Alps
Mattia Tettoni
- 172 Intermezzo: On Traversías
Álvaro Mercado Jara
- 186 Part III: Common Grounds
Federico Brogginì and Pietro Manaresi
- 190 11. *Hortus in-conclusus*: demythologizing the garden
Jacopo Cantalini
- 204 12. Migrating forests. On the ecologies of mining landscapes in Limburg, Belgium
Jacopo Zani
- 216 13. An anthropogenic thickness
Davide Simoni
- 228 14. The Bukavo Urban Reference Plan: an instrument for territorial transition?
Gulain Amani Mushizi
- 240 15. Towards a culture of soil relations
Federico Brogginì
- 254 Part IV: Shifting Waterscapes
Amina Chouairi and Joan Martí Elias
- 258 16. Down-stream urbanity
Joan Martí Elias
- 272 17. Right to the sea. The coast as a landscape in transition to be reclaimed
Klarissa Pica
- 286 18. The hydrosocial territory of the Bumbu Valley, Kinshasa
Pietro Manaresi
- 298 19. Brussels is leaking. Mapping spatial and socio-technical transition of urban drainage services conducted by their users
Evelien van den Bruel

310 Postfazione | Postface: In transition at all times
Marco Ranzato and Annalisa Metta

17 RIGHT TO THE
SEA. THE COAST
AS A LANDSCAPE
IN TRANSITION TO
BE RECLAIMED

KLARISSA PICA
Università Iuav di Venezia

The concept of transition has gradually pervaded the public debate related to coastal territories, identifying itself as a political, economic, and social paradigm of reference.

It is understood as the evolution of a system in crisis toward new balances to face contemporary challenges. In particular, the paper understands transition as an interpretive lens by examining the multiplicity of meanings it takes on in coastal territories. On the one hand, the coast is identified as a transitional area between land and sea, in which the land-water logics constantly seek balance. On the other, the coast is identified as a landscape in transition that recognizes a change taking place and defines a condition of suspension. Starting with the Neapolitan case, the paper reflects on the possibility of recognizing the coast, fragile and public good, as an intermediate space to be designed and managed with alternative models, with a view to a socio-ecological transition.

17.4 TERRITORIO-MARE AS A TRANSITIONAL LANDSCAPE AND ITS VARIABLE THICKNESS

The concept of transition has gradually pervaded the public debate related to the urban planning discipline, identifying itself as a political, economic, and social paradigm of reference. It is understood as the evolution of a system in crisis toward new balances to meet contemporary challenges. This process has become a paradigmatic concept in the definition of development strategies in different areas and levels of policy. The social-ecological transition is embedded within two issues: the transformation of living patterns (and land-use models) and a balanced distribution of the costs involved in this transformation among the different social groups and territories involved.

Concerning coastal territories, the transition is identified as an interpretive lens with double meanings. Indeed, on the one hand, the coast is an area 'of transition' between land and water, the threshold point between the city and the noncity. According to this interpretation, the coastline is a dynamic and ever-changing area characterised by complex interaction phenomena between the terrestrial and marine environments, in which land-water logics constantly seek balance (Bertoncin, 2008).

On the other, the coast is an area 'In transition' that recognizes a change in progress and defines a specific condition of suspension. According to this declination, transition indicates a shift toward an arrangement that focuses on the ability to cope with some challenges central to our contemporary times, reconfiguring goals and reformulating the project. In this sense, reference is made to that whole set of actions that can no longer be procrastinated or generalized, which determines a necessary innovation in the way of looking at the issue of the design of the city-sea relationship along coastal territories.

Looking at the coast through this dual lens leads to an overcoming of its original meanings, identifying it as a relational sphere with varying depths. It transforms from "line" into thickness between the city's geometric rules and the changing space of the natural landscape, overcoming the dichotomous land-sea distinction and introducing reasoning about a different representation. Defined as the area of the earth's surface where land and sea meet (Carter, 2017; Vies, Spencer, 1995), the coast is identified as a changing fluid space influenced by the interaction of different degrees of anthropogenic and natural pressure.

Therefore, the coast is considered a section of land whose geometry depends on different gradients of wetness (Da Cunha, 2010), a space of interaction with different spatial boundaries in a continuous overlapping of possible limits. Recalling Berger (2007), this territory describes a state of liminality, something that lives in transition and eludes all classification but which constantly instigates change, the search for a new balance between the parts.

The current condition of ecological, social, and economic transitions requires building a new adaptive and resilient coastal project and a new approach, defined within the research as "territorio-mare". This refers to the idea of a dynamic coast that looks at the sea as the way the city reinterprets itself. It is also characterised by the intense concentration of

dynamics, pressures, and flows and, in particular, by the use its people made of it (Crosta, 2010).

Looking at the coast from this perspective, attentive to the plurality of practices and the rhythms of the use of coastal space, makes it possible to show its variability and the continuous mutation of its thickness. Thus, starting from the notion of practice as “what people do” and the coast as thickness, the contribution investigates new perspectives through which to orient the transformation of coasts, constructing a shared narrative to be the basis of an adaptive coastal project in a renewed balance between land and sea.

17.2 THE COAST AS A FRAGILE AND PUBLIC GOOD

Coasts, as areas of intersection between the land and the sea, express the intimate relationship between the two elements and are identified as a paradigmatic space for disciplinary reflection. A public good par excellence, a vulnerable and scarce ecosystem, the coast is a fragile transitional thickness, subjected to countless disturbances that have irreparably compromised its balance (Guizio, 2022).

Talking about territorio-mare in transition leads to looking at the coast in its dual dimension of a fragile and public good. Coasts are the areas most vulnerable to climate change and most exposed to increasingly frequent and intense extreme events (IPCC, 2019; Enea, 2020). These fragile goods, as the intersection of anthropogenic and environmental pressures, are places where the effects of climate change will become most evident. That is especially so at the points of major depression, where sea level rise and erosion processes will lead to rather significant geographic transformations, with which the transition project must contend. Coastal strips have undergone substantial pressure due to the progressive proliferation of urbanisation and the conquest of ever-larger spaces by construction, infrastructure, and production or industrial facilities, which have consumed land and stiffened the dynamic land-sea interface (Zanchini, Manigrasso, 2017; Di Venosa, Manigrasso, 2022; Curci et al., 2021). These phenomena have compromised valuable ecosystems and contributed substantially to accelerating the vulnerability of coastlines and coastal communities, which face the effects of sea level rise and the increase of extreme events. Indeed, coastal ones are distinguished as territories exposed to the most radical manifestations of climate change, which has contributed to altering their natural, identity, and cultural characteristics and underscored a global urgency for transformation.

In particular, thinking in terms of thickness, these territories, as the intersection between one system advancing and another forced to retreat, are threatened by numerous coastal hazards: the permanent submergence of large portions of land; enhance coastal erosion (with a significant reduction of beaches) and shoreline retreat; increased frequency and intensity of coastal flooding; salinization of surface water, soil, and ground; loss of wetlands; disruption and permanent change of coastal ecosystems; and impeded drainage (Oppenheimer et al., 2019). The climate change scenario demands urgent planning response transforming the land-sea relationship

and how communities perceive it, addressing resilience to this adaptive socio-ecological system (García, 2023).

Second, the coast can be considered a particular form of public good: the beaches, and in a broader sense, littoral zone, in the context of state property, be part of the category of maritime property and, as such, identified as a public good of collective belonging with high social relevance (Lucarelli et al., 2021).

The historical perspective of this dimension is closely related to a sort of “beach revolution”: a qualitative change rather than a quantitative one that sees the beach abandoning its marginal role (linked to the imagery of fear and disquiet) to assume one linked to well-being and leisure progressively. Between the 1950s and 1960s, the progressive attractiveness of the sea determined a shift from elitist experience to mass tourism, leading to the recognition of the coast as one of the main drivers of the tourist economy in Italy. Seaside holidays became more common for a broader population, generating economic growth and numerous dis-values. Due to the consolidation of mass tourism and the expansion of ways to enjoy the sea in various forms, we have witnessed an increasing number of tourist-recreational facilities and a progressive transformation of the coastal landscape. This generated an alteration of the natural dynamism of the coastlines, depleting their natural characteristics.

As an asset belonging to the state, it should be directly and freely usable by the community. However, equity of access to the maritime domain is often not guaranteed, and concessions to private entities are imposed compared to the available coastal area. In recent decades, the surge in the number of concessions for tourist-recreational use and the growth of beach facilities, together with the lack of national indications regarding minimum percentages of beach to be dedicated to free enjoyment, has led along the Italian coasts to contrasting and paradoxical situations in terms of occupied coastline. The combination of these dynamics has progressively taken the coast away from equal enjoyment by citizens, accentuating certain inequalities and identifying the coast as a perpetually contested space: contested in uses, plans, competencies, and tools. According to recent data made available by the Sistema Informativo Demanio Marittimo, beach concessions occupy 43% of Italy’s sandy coastline, the percentage of which highlights how just under half of the beaches guarantee free enjoyment of the coastline, penalising its social function (Legambiente, 2022).

Within the recent political debate regarding beach concessions and, in particular, the complex process of Italy’s adaptation to the Bolkestein Directive, a collective sentiment seems to be emerging that denounces the monopolistic regime that has characterised part of the concessions system over the past decades. Since 2006, Italy has never formally transposed the Bolkestein Directive (2006/123/EC) ①, which regulates competition and provides for systems to assign the management of maritime state property through transparent and impartial selection procedures in order to protect the depletion of a scarce resource, such as the coast and beach. In many Italian contexts, the failure to comply with the European Directive, the generalised system of extensions, and the mismanagement of some coastal stretches have de facto privatised the state property, removing it from the free enjoyment of the community.

In looking at the coast in the changing climate scenario as a public space of collective belonging, it seems appropriate to reflect on the role of the maritime domain. The two declinations of the coast are strongly interrelated: due to the interaction of progressive erosion, unauthorised development, privatisation, infrastructure, and sea level rise, we are witnessing the disappearance of the state line. In some contexts, the state property dividing line understood as the boundary of the maritime state property with the property of third parties, has been eroded. In others, it has expanded due to sand accumulations. In others, it is no longer there.

The awareness that in most parts of the country, the state dividend is in the water makes us reflect on the need to reconstruct a public domain not only to ensure its accessibility to all citizens but also to recognize it as an intermediate space designed to ensure safety for those who reside near the sea. While there is a need to ensure that a fair percentage of beaches remain for the free availability of citizens, there is also an emerging need to reorder how state property is managed. Concessions are allocated, paying attention to the criteria of transparency, sustainability, and accessibility.

17.3 IN-BETWEEN NAPLES

In this framework, the city of Naples seems paradigmatic to talk about coastal thickness as a public good, to plan to provide security from the advance of water, and to reclaim its use.

Naples is emblematic of its great difficulty in accessing the coast, understood only in fragments (Russo, 2010; Di Gennari, Guida, 2002). Over the years, the shoreline has undergone several transformations that have led to increasing fragmentation, hindering in most of its segments its direct fruition and sometimes even its mere perception. In particular, it presents itself as a denied-sea city because of the constellation of beach concessions that make the only existing tracts of beach and not yet banned from bathing for reasons of pollution, practically private and inaccessible. The dynamics surrounding the management of concessions have generated profound social inequalities and the conversion of public space into a mere consumer good, limiting the portions of free beach and only sometimes guaranteeing the right of way required by law.

As mentioned earlier, the combination of the dynamics has made accessible parts highly restricted by accustoming citizens to experience the sea through alternative practices and uses. The immersion in the Neapolitan context and the direct observation of some transects transversal to the coast, with a double perspective from the land and the sea ●, allowed to intercept the formal and informal practices through which citizens reclaim the right to the sea and redefine the coastal thickness [fig. 2].

The issue of sea usability has been particularly central since June 2022. Primarily, the resolution's approval on "the open and safe management of public beaches" brought attention to the issue. The deliberation, in fact, for some of those few free stretches of the beach, in particular for Donn'Anna and Monache beach in Posillipo, provided for closed numbers and entrance control by the owners of neighbouring lidos. This solicited a great deal of tension in the citizens, which saw the public character of the coastline

impaired and triggered numerous mobilizations through the support of citizen committees (especially Mare libero, Gratuito e Pulito Napoli) that animated, and is continuing to animate, the entire summer season with continuity [fig. 3]. In addition, with the end of the summer season, access to the Donn'Anna beach remained closed with a gate. A 1997 ordinance allowed citizens in the fall and winter period to have access, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. to the said beach through a gate operated by the concessionaire of the neighbouring lido. However, the lack of awareness of the ordinance has for years seen the gate close with the end of the bathing season.

In September 2022, through the work of the Mare Libero, Gratuito e Pulito Napoli committee, the ordinance became public knowledge, allowing citizens to demand that the concessionaire open the gate and recover a de facto right denied for over two decades. Within days of the opening, another ordinance was passed ordering the gate to be closed due to hydrological hazards (which was never supported by evidence).

This event led the committee to experiment with awareness and mobilisation initiatives, including an appeal to the TAR made possible by the input of hundreds of donations and a crowdfunding campaign ●, which enabled them to reach the amount needed to file the appeal.

Second, the press review highlighted the different conflicts of stakeholders, particularly between the interests of private concession holders and the protection of the general citizen interest.

Finally, the adoption of the new Piano di utilizzazione delle aree demaniali marittime ④ of the Campania region and the long-awaited transfer of jurisdiction of the coastal tract of the municipality of Naples from the Autorità di Sistema Portuale del Mar Tirreno Centrale to the municipality, have underscored the urgency of the issue in the policy agenda as well. In particular, the processing of drafting observations on the plan by trade associations was an opportunity to build territorial social networks composed of all the associations and committees (working in defence of the sea) of the various coastal municipalities in Campania ●.

17.4 OPEN REFLECTIONS

The Neapolitan experience underscores how a conscious collective consciousness has now emerged to exercise its rights over public property, intending to recognize the social function of the maritime domain.

The paper reflects on the possibility of recognizing the maritime domain as an intermediate space to design to ensure security for those who inhabit territories near the sea, with a view to socio-ecological transition and collective reappropriation of denied tracts of the coast.

The Bolkestein Directive seems to turn out to be a pretext for questioning in urban planning terms a scarce asset but, above all, for defining a project of coastal reform with concessions that also take on planning from a socio-ecological perspective while recognizing the beach as a public good. In this sense, especially in a context as complex as the Neapolitan one, there emerges the need to “restore dignity” to the assets of collective belonging, ensuring that a fair percentage remains outside the logic of the market, experimenting with other forms of management through the

involvement of associations, non-profit organizations or the third sector. Within the Discipline introduced by the new PUAD there is the provision of areas of unrestricted use to the extent of no less than 30 percent of the length of the strands and 30 percent of other state-owned surfaces usable for bathing purposes. This percentage does not represent an adequate balance between available and concession areas and does not consider homologous stretches. In addition, the plan has a purely touristic and economic lexicon and, in terms of participation, always refers exclusively to trade associations without ever mentioning citizens' associations or committees working in defence of the sea.

The search for a new balance between the city and the sea can start with bottom-up reappropriation actions and experimentation with different management forms, where the involvement of inhabitants can become an opportunity for collectively managed regeneration. The building of social networks and citizen mobilizations are therefore identified as a graft for reclaiming the right to the sea.

The reading of informal practices and the narrative of ongoing mobilizations lead to a reflection on the possibility of recognizing the coast, because of its usefulness for the benefit of the community, as a commons, allowing it to fulfil its social function in terms of usability, that is, restoring to it the nature of an asset of collective belonging.

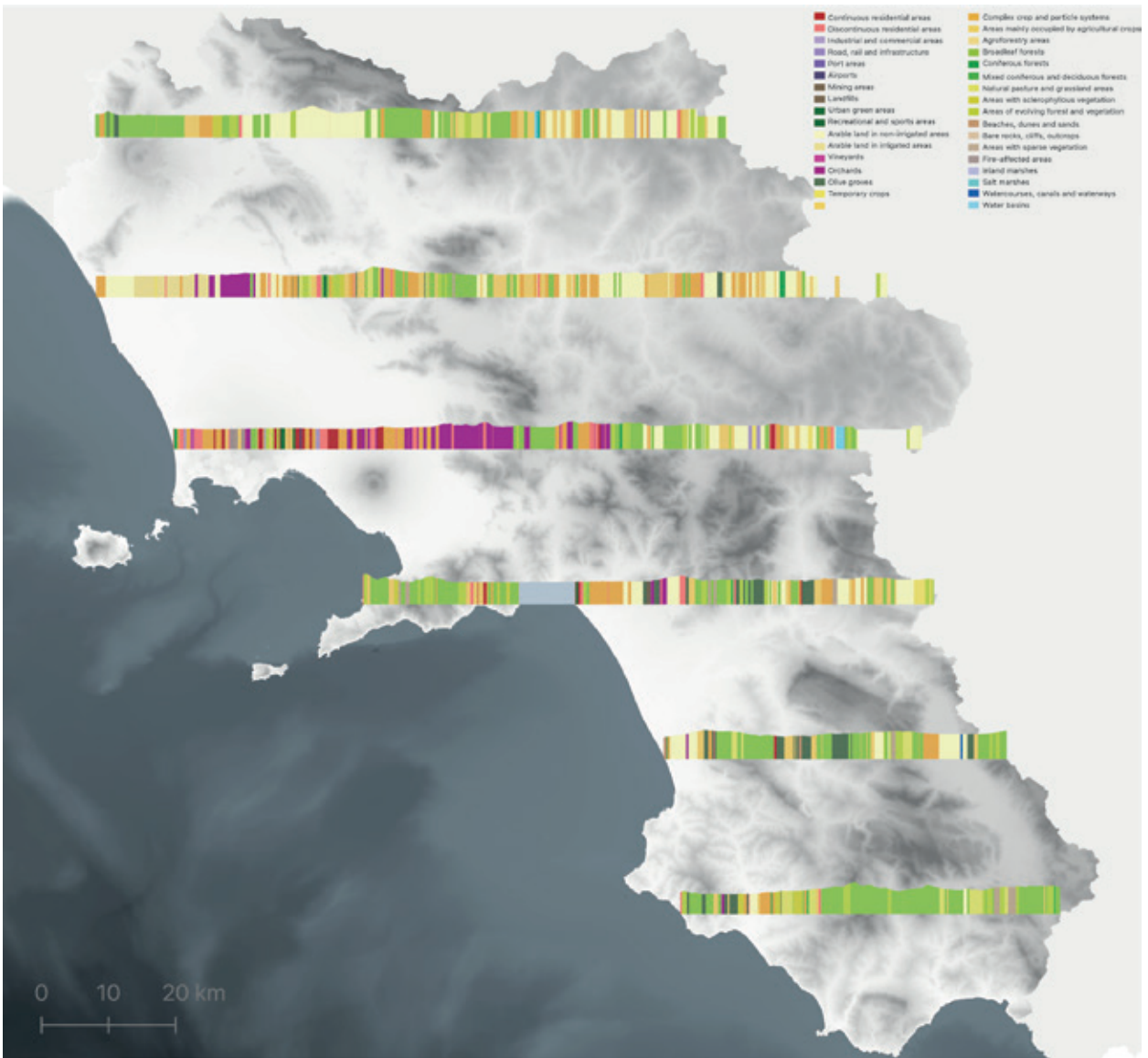


fig. 1. Coast as variable depth thickness of different gradients of wetness. DNA thematic sections showing the predominant components of land use in the Campania land-sea interaction. Elaborated by the autor.



fig. 2. Fishing in the new skyline: when the informal reclaim what the port denies (Photo by K. Pica, 2022; article by A. Lucarelli “Il diritto al mare nell’agenda degli aspiranti sindaci” in Repubblica Napoli 05-08-21).

fig. 3. Naples - On July 1, 2022, the Mare libero Napoli committee organised a mobilisation in Piazza Municipio for unrestricted access to the sea, following the City Council Resolution establishing a closed number for some public beaches, subject to reservations and under the control of private managers. (Photo by K. Pica, 2022; article by A. Lucarelli “Posillipo la spiaggia vietata di Donn’Anna” in Repubblica Napoli 5-12-2022).

ENDNOTES

①: The directive specifically on services in the internal market lays down provisions on the free establishment of service providers and free movement between Member States.

●: The research used walking along a transect as an exploratory device to observe and investigate the land-sea relationship. The direct experience from the sites made it possible to intercept the transition processes and to measure “how deep is the coast” in terms of different gradients of wetness. In particular, the dual perspective of the coast from the land and the sea, aimed at highlighting all the relationships that the sea establishes with the coast and vice versa, was made possible with a boat (or kayak in some cases).

●: For further information: https://buonacausa.org/cause/mareliberonapoli?fbclid=IwAR227hUdGmlSMt_1m31uBy3TqsFGrWppOEDMFZ8m-L6zy4Que8eRRCYrApHU#.Y5DP4Hrxd-E.facebook.

④: The PUAD, as a regulatory tool, regulates the use of maritime state property areas for tourism and recreational purposes.

●: The network set up multiple online meetings (to conflate observations on the plan), a regional awareness-raising day with information tables and leaflets in each coastal municipality, and a praesidium at the Regional government building. For further information about the initiative: <http://www.marelibero.eu/la-campania-reclama-il-diritto-al-mare/>.

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