

Strategies for Advancing Global Trends in University Civic Engagement – the Talloires Network, a Global Coalition of Engaged Universities

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Abstract

This article discusses trends in the global university civic engagement movement: the dynamic leadership being exerted by the heads of universities, diversity of approach with universality of vision, the increasing integration of civic engagement in teaching and research, and the growing role and impacts of global, regional and national networks. It then presents selected programs and activities of the Talloires Network, a global coalition of institutions committed to strengthening the civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education. The co-authors reflect on the Network's strategies for advancing key trends: providing and increasing financial resources, co-producing new knowledge for action, increasing public awareness for university civic engagement, investing in faculty and staff professional development, and fostering South-North dialogue and collaboration.

Keywords: higher education, civic engagement, social responsibility, networks

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Trends in the Global University Civic Engagement Movement

Some years ago observers could characterise the growing community service work of universities as being a limited peripheral activity of institutions of higher education in selected regions of the world. Today there can be no doubt that university civic engagement has become a significant and sustained movement, as the number of “engaged” universities has expanded dramatically and their programmes have become integrated and institutionalised across academic disciplines. Increasingly, engaged universities are collaborating through an expanding set of global, regional and national networks organized to strengthen the civic mission of higher education and the field is enjoying amplified support within communities and from funders (Hoyt and Hollister, 2014).

The Talloires Network, today the largest international network focused on university civic engagement, was established by a group of 29 vice-chancellors, rectors and presidents in September 2005. Meeting for three days of spirited dialogue in Talloires, France, these pioneers in moving beyond the ivory tower identified and discussed shared values, goals, strategies and visions for the future of higher education around the globe. They drafted and co-signed the Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education, and launched a network to cultivate their conversation and to foster collaborative action. Since that time, the network has grown from 29 universities to 312 universities in 72 countries.

Guided by an elected steering committee of dynamic institutional leaders and supported by a secretariat at Tufts University, membership in the Talloires Network is a formal commitment made by university heads – presidents, vice-chancellors, and rectors who affirm:

Some of our universities and colleges are older than the nations in which they are located; others are young and emerging; but all bear a special obligation to contribute to the public good, through educating students, expanding access to education, and the creation and timely application of new knowledge. Our institutions recognize that we do not exist in isolation from society, nor from the communities in which we are located. Instead, we carry a unique obligation to listen, understand and contribute to social transformation and development.

—*Talloires Declaration 2005*

Network members aim to expand higher education civic engagement programmes, apply standards of excellence and peer review to community engagement, foster partnerships between universities and communities to empower groups and increase the relevance of higher education. The [Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education](#) is available in Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Urdu (Talloires Network, 2014b).

Dynamic Leadership of University Heads

The 2005 gathering in Talloires, France represented an important milestone in the university civic engagement movement. Before the founding conference of the Network, there had been little interaction internationally on the topic among the heads of engaged universities. This gathering exhibited the emergence of university vice-chancellors, rectors and presidents for whom civic engagement is a high priority and central part of their agenda. A vital strength of the global movement is the visionary leadership and bold actions of these top officials who not only chart the future of individual institutions but also influence relationships between higher education and other sectors. Supporting their leadership is crucial and a defining principle of the Network.

Many university presidents who are proponents of civic engagement see it as an effective way to educate their students to be leaders for change. Lisa Anderson, President, American University in Cairo, says of AUC's new initiatives in Cairo, "We are embedded, active, and involved partners. Our students develop business plans for small and medium enterprises, our faculty perform in theatre and film, our alumni manage social service agencies.." Anderson adds, "In the digital world of the twenty-first century, learning will once again be recognised as happening everywhere and all the time, and teaching will increasingly be acknowledged to be guided learning-by-doing. In labs, seminars and other settings, the cultivation of creative problem-solvers, effective colleagues and collaborators, and responsible citizens in many domains is essential. How better to do that than in engaging early and often in understanding the needs and aspirations of those around you?" (Anderson, 2013) At Tufts University, President Anthony Monaco has made active citizenship and societal impact a significant strategic focus. The university integrates values and skills of active citizenship in the education of students in all fields of study – preparing citizen engineers, citizen physicians, citizen businesspeople and citizen humanists. President Monaco notes that this tradition "is passed from one generation to the next. Our students take it with them on graduation day, along with their diploma." (Monaco, 2012)

Similarly, President Scott Cowen has placed civic engagement at the heart of the strategic vision of Tulane University, noting "We have dismantled the image of the remote ivory tower and replaced it with that of an engaged and dynamic community of learners and doers. He underscores the link between university civic engagement and educating students, stating, "I want the higher education community to be known for developing the next generation of engaged citizens and leaders." (Cowen, 2013) In her inaugural address upon becoming vice-chancellor of the University of Pretoria in South Africa, Cheryl de la Rey declared, "A strong, resilient and peaceful democracy depends on a shared sense of civic responsibility, social interconnectedness and social justice. It is our firm intention to embrace a social, development

perspective to our human capital development role so that we produce graduates who are valued not only for their academic and technical skills, but also for their role in bringing about a more harmonious and equitable society.” Thus civic engagement is understood by such leaders as, among other things, a teaching strategy, a path to achieving valued learning outcomes in students. (de la Rey, 2014)

A fundamental element of the collective vision of engaged university leaders is commitment to substantial and equitable partnerships with the communities in which they are located. Founding President of Aga Khan University in Pakistan, Shams Kassim-Lakha, states, “Universities have an obligation to share their intellectual and material resources with their immediate community and not simply to co-exist with them.” (Kassim-Lakha, 2013) His perspective is echoed by many university heads, including Sir Leszek Borysiewicz, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom, who acknowledges the importance of embracing civic engagement also as a route to higher quality scholarship and education. He explains, “Academics do not withdraw into universities, despite their monastic roots, to think deep thoughts – they deepen those thoughts by constant engagement with others and the challenge of real world problems such as poverty” (Borysiewicz, 2013).

An important additional outcome of university civic engagement is bridging longstanding cultural and ethnic divisions. As former Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Malaysia Sharifah Hapsah Shahabudin avers, “The university serves as critic and conscious of society. It reconciles ethnic transitions with state rationality and legitimizes them by founding a set of practices, a cultural image, a discourse, or an institution. This is also part of the social contract of universities... It is a way of providing evidence of value for the financing spent on universities.” (August 18, 2008) She sees participation by students and professors in community service as a powerful way to foster inter-group cohesion, illustrating “When we’ve common goals, we forget our differences. Civic engagement is a better laboratory for building intergroup understanding than the lecture halls” (Watson et al., 2011; 94). Comparably, Rector

David Noel Ramirez-Padilla of Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico focuses attention to such student learning outcomes as “integrity, ethical standards and a humanistic outlook.” A professor of Finance for nearly four decades, Rector Ramirez urges students to resist the temptations of corruption and dishonesty for achieving prosperity, emphasising the importance of an ethical perspective. He explains, “Our students, as well as myself, have tattooed in our minds and hearts the importance of civic engagement in an ethical way. Upon graduation, students sign a promise to practice their profession ethically, act beyond their own personal needs and to serve others that are in most need.” (Ramirez-Padilla, 2013)

Diversity of Approach with Universality of Vision

The global university civic engagement movement is characterised by a diversity of approach with universality of vision. From a global perspective, a “one size fits all” approach to understanding university civic engagement is not a viable philosophy (Bawa and Munck, 2012). It is a broad idea with nomenclatures and approaches that vary tremendously from place to place because every community possesses a unique blend of history, culture, language, socio-economic conditions, politics and climate. In short, universities and communities develop approaches to civic engagement that respond to, and are shaped by, the conditions they face and work together to improve.

At the same time, the Network's experience and research shows that university civic engagement activities are more similar in the various parts of the world than they are different, in terms of the fundamental activities and partnerships that are involved as well as what they aspire to achieve. The most common approaches include community-based research, applied research for policy development and public decision-making, service-learning, experiential learning, and extension and volunteer programmes. Engaged universities seek to forge and maintain mutually beneficial partnerships with key sectors, namely the private sector, community-based organisations, governments, and philanthropy. Typically, university-community partnerships aim to enhance student learning, produce relevant research while

addressing pervasive challenges such as poverty, natural disaster, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and disease. From South America to Asia to Africa, university faculty, staff and students are working hand-in-hand with community leaders to provide tutoring to refugee children, shelters for the homeless, legal aid clinics, micro-business development, and HIV/AIDs education.

Increasing Integration of Civic Engagement in Teaching and Research

More recently, we have witnessed a shift in how universities conceptualise and organise their civic engagement and social responsibility activities. For several decades, the dominant pattern was to think of public service or civic engagement a separate “third mission” and an area of activity decidedly less important than, and entirely separate from, teaching and research. In many universities throughout the globe, there has been a shift toward thinking of public service as an essential and inextricable part of the two primary missions (teaching and research). Numerous scholars argue the need and have taken action to integrate civic engagement across the traditionally soloed university missions, seeking to profoundly reframe the purpose and reshape the culture of higher education (Saltmarsh and Hartley, 2011; Hoyt 2013).

The integration of civic engagement throughout the tripartite university mission moves such programmes and activities “from the margins to the mainstream” (Furco, 2010). A growing number of university heads are motivated to enact these changes because they see community-engaged teaching and research as a pathway to higher quality teaching and research (Gearan and Hollister, 2013). In addition to enhancing faculty and student research and learning, it strengthens institutional brand and identity, increases public support for universities, and motivates and develops staff and contributes to social justice and to solving real-world problems beyond the campus (Reid, 2013).

The Growing Role and Impacts of University Civic Engagement Networks

A key development in the higher education landscape has been the expansion –in virtually all parts of the globe– of national, regional and global networks formed to advance community

engagement activities. Many of these coalitions formally collaborate with the Talloires Network, including [Asia Engage](#), [Campus Compact](#) (USA), [Campus Engage](#) (Ireland), Community-University Network (Russia), [Engagement Australia](#), [Latin American Center for Service-Learning](#), [Ma'an Arab University Alliance for Civic Engagement](#), Pakistan Chapter of the Talloires Network, and [South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum](#). Other substantial alliances in this field are prospering in Canada, Spain and Brazil.

The development of the Ma'an Alliance, Campus Engage, and the Pakistan Chapter of the Talloires Network illustrate the similar origins, goals and activities of the larger group of networks worldwide. In 2008, with broad acknowledgement that higher education in the Arab region was in crisis, [The Gerhart Center for Philanthropy and Civic Engagement](#) at the American University in Cairo invited senior staff, faculty and students from Arab universities to a conference in Cairo to explore potential interest in civic engagement in higher education institutions (Hoyt and Hollister, 2014). They discovered a high level of interest from people at universities across the region. Rather than wait for major public policy changes, participants expressed a belief that civic engagement might be a way to substantially reform higher education from within (Watson et al., 2011). Advocating for engaged forms of research and teaching as well as practical relationships with communities in this time of rapid change, they formed the Ma'an Arab University Alliance for Civic Engagement. The Alliance serves as a vehicle for exchanging experience and knowledge with other regional networks toward this aim (Ibrahim, 2014).

To provide support for and collaborate with the Ma'an Alliance, the Talloires Network recently co-sponsored a workshop in Amman, Jordan, entitled "How to Integrate Civic Engagement onto University Campuses in the Arab Region: A Consultation for University Presidents and Senior Administrators." The workshop, organized by the Ma'an Alliance, [Silatech](#), and [Innovations in Civic Participation](#) took place in February 2014 at Silatech with 34 university heads and administrators from Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Sudan and Yemen.

Regional and national networks of engaged universities also emerge in response to changes in the higher education policy environment. According to Lorraine McIlrath at the Community Knowledge Initiative at the National University of Ireland Galway, the Universities Act for Ireland 1997 provided a foundation of the expansion of civic engagement in higher education. Following the recommendations of the Prime Minister's task force on active citizenship, the government made funding available to implement Campus Engage, a national network in Ireland to promote civic engagement as a core function of higher education to impact the social and economic development of communities (Hoyt and Hollister, 2014). A sub-group of the Campus Engage Steering Committee is currently working with ICP and the Network on a high profile event to enhance knowledge. Over twenty higher education institution presidents are expected to participate in a signing of a Civic Engagement Charter in June 2014 at the Dublin Castle. The ceremony will be followed by a Talloires Network roundtable on tracking and measuring community engagement impacts.

In South Asia, in alignment with the strategic focus of the Higher Education Commission and to contribute to the socio-economic development of the nation, 39 university heads recently established the [Pakistan Chapter of the Talloires Network](#) (PCTN, 2014). PCTN members share a commitment to promoting community service, civic engagement and service learning, and aim to collaborate with other sectors by way of curriculum development, conferences and trainings, and funding for competitive seed grants for outstanding programs.

Its founding chair is Rector Muhamed Asghar, National University of Sciences and Technology, and the university that he heads serves as secretariat for the coalition.

It is a distinct strength of the global university civic engagement movement that multiple alliances with overlapping missions have been organised and are sharing resources and expertise to advance a common cause. The Talloires Network cooperates actively with these sister networks, benefiting from their efforts and seeking to contribute to their work as well.

Significant global higher education associations that focus on university engagement include the [Global Alliance for Community Engaged Research](#) and [International Consortium for Higher Education Civic Responsibility and Democracy](#). A related development is that several international associations with broader mandates are playing major roles in advancing university civic engagement. Notable examples include [Universia](#) – the association of Santander Universities, [Global University Network for Innovation](#), [Association of Commonwealth Universities](#), [International Association of Universities](#), and national or continental groups including [Association of African Universities](#) and [Association of American Colleges and Universities](#).

Counter Pressures

Inarguably, there are numerous powerful counter pressures that challenge the promise of the university civic engagement movement. They include diminished public spending for institutions of higher education, a dominant culture of higher education that values individualism and competition above equity and collective prosperity, the rapid expansion or “massification” of systems in China and beyond, and unstable or undemocratic contexts where university civic engagement may be seen as a threat to the government (Hoyt and Hollister, 2014). While these forces constrain the development of university civic engagement, other factors continue to propel the engaged university trend. Among the influential positive drivers are the growing public expectation that universities contribute more directly and substantially to societal priorities, demand by students that community service be part of their higher education experience, the vibrant leadership of university heads, and public policies that support university engagement.

Talloires Network's Strategies for Strengthening the Global Movement

Providing and Increasing Financial Resources

A top priority voiced by a majority of university civic engagement advocates is to secure more adequate financial support for their programmes. The Network has sought to address this challenge in two ways: raising funds to distribute to its member institutions, and organising Network leaders to advocate collectively with private and public funders.

The first funds directed to Network members was through a programme of competitive seed grants for Chilean universities. From 2010-12, with support from the Walmart Foundation, the Network issued grants targeted at improving economic opportunities for marginalised women and girls. By partnering with Participa, a Chilean nonprofit with considerable experience in the field, the Network was able to effectively administer this initiative and provide capacity-building support for participating universities. The grants targeted projects in low-income communities. Some, such as the Universidad Austral's "New Colors and Living Landscape," which united students across disciplines to improve the garden for a housing complex, have created lasting physical impacts.

Launched in July 2012, a major Network project, the [Youth Economic Participation Initiative](#), is providing three-year demonstration grants to universities in Burkina Faso, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Malaysia, Pakistan, Chile and Mexico. With a \$5.9 million grant from the MasterCard Foundation, this program strives to address the global crisis in youth unemployment by supporting the efforts of engaged universities in developing countries to create and test innovative models for preparing their students to become successful employees and entrepreneurs in their communities. With YEPI partner institutions, the Network expects to accomplish an inclusive approach to university community engagement, one that

encompasses both their economic participation and community service functions, crucial activities that frequently are not connected effectively within institutions of higher education.

Our second strategy has been to organise the collective voices of university heads from around the world to encourage private and public funders to invest at higher levels in university civic engagement. In 2009 at the Carnegie Corporation of New York City, and in 2013 at Rockefeller Foundation, the Talloires Network sponsored roundtable discussions with major foundation leaders. These candid conversations addressed: What should be the future of the global university civic engagement movement? How can funders and universities work together to achieve that future? Through these exchanges, the Network strives to build a shared understanding that university civic engagement is a great leverage and funding opportunity to mobilize the person power and expertise of universities to address major societal challenges. Other participating funders have included [Grupo Santander](#), [MasterCard Foundation](#), IBM International Foundation, [Pearson Foundation](#), [Open Society Foundations](#), [Walmart Foundation](#), [Kresge Foundation](#), World Bank, and USAID. Grupo Santander provides significant annual support for operating costs of the Talloires Network.

Co-producing New Knowledge for Action

By taking advantage of opportunities for research embedded within and cutting across existing Network programs and activities, the [Action Research Program](#) co-generates new knowledge with and for Network members to inform action and strengthen the global civic engagement movement. During 2013-14, the Network's research is focusing primarily on 16 university civic engagement exemplars in 12 countries, one in each region of the globe and three-quarters representing the Global South. The three key areas of research are: effective strategies for university civic engagement, economic development and participation, and incentives and rewards for engaged faculty.

In May 2013, Network secretariat staff participated in the 6th International Barcelona Conference for Higher Education organised by the Global University Network for Innovation. In addition to assisting with blind peer review of conference papers, leading a plenary panel discussion and a workshop session, and presenting three posters, the Network contributed the regional overview chapter for the book, [Knowledge, Engagement and Higher Education: Contributing to Social Change](#), published by Palgrave Macmillan. To build on our increasing knowledge of university civic engagement by region, in December 2013, the Network and the [Kettering Foundation](#) co-hosted a workshop in Boston entitled “Regional Perspectives on University Civic Engagement,” which included 14 representatives of exemplary Network university civic engagement programs in 7 countries and 7 different regions. The representative pairs from each university –a university faculty or staff member and a student or community partner– explored effective university civic engagement strategies and are co-authoring a paper about their program to be discussed and developed further at a second workshop in Dayton, Ohio, in July 2014. The collection of papers, we anticipate, will add underrepresented and diverse perspectives as well as substantial knowledge to the practice and study of university civic engagement.

Similarly, a robust research agenda is a crucial dimension of the Youth Economic Participation Initiative. A team of faculty and graduate students in the [University of Minnesota](#)’s departments of [Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development](#) and [Social Work](#) have joined the Network as learning partners through 2016. In addition to monitoring and evaluating YEPI participant changes in attitudes towards work and entrepreneurship, the number of new enterprises established and the rate of jobs with employers secured, we will co-facilitate an ongoing exchange of information and ideas among YEPI partner institutions and other Network members. The Network’s online community of practice can support partner institutions in learning from one another and overcoming obstacles to reaching their programmatic goals. Furthermore, the community of practice can amplify the impact of YEPI by providing a space for engaged universities around the world to developing new knowledge on effective strategies

for community partnerships.

In March 2012, the Talloires Network launched the *Leaders in the Civic Engagement Movement* series, which is published in English and Spanish in our monthly [newsletter](#). Thirty, one-hour interviews with university heads as well as university administrators, faculty, students, community partners and funders have been featured along with an overview of the national and institutional contexts in which the civic engagement programs are operating. The following themes have emerged from these interviews: Leaders often come from humble beginnings, and have been influenced by parents who believe in service to others. They have been educated and built distinguished careers in a diverse range of disciplines. They have experienced resistance from faculty and perceive the need to change the hearts and minds of faculty as essential to the advancement of university civic engagement. They share a belief in the importance of measuring the impacts of civic engagement efforts. These leaders are passionate and driven by the desire to ameliorate inequalities and reduce poverty. And they agree that there is a university civic engagement movement in higher education and emphasize the need to learn from and support each other. By the end of 2014, we will complete and disseminate sixty interviews to inspire and inform existing leaders and attract other leaders to the movement.

Increasing Public Awareness for University Civic Engagement

The Network brings attention to quality university civic engagement programmes through our annual [MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship](#). This prize not only raises public awareness for civic engagement in higher education, but it also provides winning programs with financial support and recognition to advance their work (Hollister et al., 2012). Prize winners from the past 5 years are publicised on our website, in our e-newsletter, and called upon to participate in workshops and conferences. The ideas and practices embodied by the winning programs offer rich and detailed insights to the global movement. They have informed our own research and have substantially contributed to understanding university-community strategies and impacts.

To date over one-half of the Network's members from 41 countries have applied for the MacJannet Prize. Eighteen first, second and third place prizes have been awarded. First prize winners include: Aga Khan University (Pakistan), Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (Chile), Universidad de Buenos Aires (Argentina), Universidad Veracruzana (Mexico), and International Medical University (Malaysia).

Investing in Faculty and Staff Professional Development

The Network's Faculty and Staff Professional Development Program, supported by Pearson Foundation and led by Innovations in Civic Participation, aims to impart to executives and faculty and staff the technical skills and knowledge that will enable them to expand and strengthen civic engagement efforts at their universities, as well as develop strategies and methods to promote institutional policy change and quality improvement (Talloires Network, 2014).

To reach these goals, the professional development programme encourages and manages the exchange of tools and materials as identified by member institutions and regional networks. Resource development and training delivery has included a combination of in-person workshops as well as webinars. The programme also promotes the internationalisation of professional development of leadership for engagement through the development of an online clearinghouse and a speakers bureau. The clearinghouse of research and training resources draw from the global South to ensure diverse viewpoints and the speakers bureau functions as a directory of university civic engagement experts who are effective presenters capable of transferring knowledge across different regional contexts. To date, dozens of engaged faculty and staff operating in isolation and lacking access to best-practice models and other instruments have benefited from the regional workshops (in Arab, Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe) as well as online conversations and resources.

Fostering South-North Dialogue and Collaboration

Later this year, the Network will convene the next global conference of the leaders of engaged universities from around the world. This gathering will build on our last global conference in [Madrid, June 2011](#), which convened more than 200 university presidents, faculty, students, and government, NGO and philanthropic leaders. Though most of our communication with members across the world is done by e-mail, telephone and social media technologies, we believe lasting and impactful relationships are developed by face-to-face interactions (Hoyt, 2010). Smaller meetings of our members, co-sponsored study tours and workshops, and participation in conferences strengthen working relationships and permit in-depth discussions on key topics (Hollister et al., 2012). The 2014 Talloires Network Leaders Conference, scheduled to take place in December in Cape Town, South Africa, is being co-sponsored by the South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum and hosted by the four universities the comprise the [Cape Higher Education Consortium](#). Several national, regional and global networks will co-sponsor and actively participate.

The Network recognizes that both the practice and literature on university civic engagement is “distorted and dominated by the lens of the Global North” (Watson et al., 2011; McIlrath, 2012; Tapia, 2014). Studies by others and our own research show that compared to Northern universities, those in the South are focused primarily on community impacts or social returns, while those in the North emphasise skills or individual returns (Bawa, 2007; Watson et al., 2011). This difference is a reflection of driving forces: societal demand in the South and institutional push in the North (Hoyt and Hollister, 2014). Cape Town is in the global South and the conference program will include a variety of activities to recognize the vital initiatives and leadership of Southern universities to accelerate social and economic development in the Southern hemisphere.

Conclusion

There Is Every Reason To Believe That The Global University Civic Engagement Movement Will Continue To Flourish, And To Produce Important Results. Among Them, Educating Students In All Fields To Be Leaders For Change, Improving Community Conditions, And Elevating Public Support For Higher Education. The Future Efforts Of Engaged Universities Around The World Will Determine How Much Can Be Accomplished In Each Of These Areas – Student Development, Community Impact, And Public Support.

In Closing, The Programmes And Activities Of The Talloires Network Aspire To Support And Further Advance Trends In The Global University Civic Engagement Movement By Providing And Increasing Financial Resources, Co-producing New Knowledge For Action, Increasing Public Awareness For University Civic Engagement, Investing In Faculty And Staff Professional Development, And Fostering South-North Dialogue And Collaboration. We Look Forward To Continuing Collaboration With University Heads And Other University Civic Engagement Leaders Around The World To Maximize Our Collective Accomplishment. Together We Can Move Beyond The Ivory Tower, Making The Engaged University The Dominant Model In Higher Education.

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