# Strategic Management for Inclusive Development: Advancing SDG 10 Through Equitable Resource Allocation in Urbanization

**[1]Samuel Elvis Addo, [2]Peter Agyekum Boateng, [2] Racheal Amoah, [2] Jeanette Owusu**

**[1]Department of Development Studies, Valley View University, Ghana**

**[2]Management Studies Department, Valley View University, Ghana**

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of strategic management in addressing urban inequalities, with a specific focus on advancing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 — Reduced Inequalities. The research systematically examines systemic barriers to equitable resource allocation in urban settings, including governance inefficiencies, uneven infrastructure distribution, and persistent socio-economic disparities. Employing a narrative literature review approach, this study synthesizes selected scholarly and policy literature on strategic management, urban inequality, and equitable resource allocation, supported by illustrative examples from diverse urban contexts. Case studies were selected based on documented outcomes, geographic diversity, and policy relevance to the Global South. The review highlights the transformative potential of participatory governance models, emerging technologies such as GIS and blockchain, and multi-sectoral collaborations in promoting equity and sustainability. The research underscores the necessity of aligning urban strategies with global frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda, to reduce disparities and enhance resilience. Practical recommendations target policymakers, urban planners, and private-sector stakeholders in developing countries, emphasizing equity-driven frameworks and scalable grassroots innovations. This study contributes to academic discourse by identifying critical gaps in existing literature and advocating for interdisciplinary approaches to inclusive urban development.

***Keywords:*** *Strategic Management, SDG 10, Urban Inequalities, Inclusive Development, Resource Allocation, Governance, Sustainability*

## INTRODUCTION

Urbanization, a transformative force in modern society, plays a dual role as both a driver of economic growth and a contributor to inequality. More than half of the world's population now resides in urban areas, where access to resources such as housing, education, healthcare, and employment remains unevenly distributed (Peng et al., 2022). This disparity intensifies challenges in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10: Reduced Inequalities, which aims to reduce disparities within and among countries by promoting equitable opportunities and outcomes (Wu, 2022).

Urban resource allocation systems are frequently constrained by bureaucratic inefficiencies, siloed governance, and insufficient participatory mechanisms, which hinder the equitable distribution of essential services, including healthcare, water, and education. The inequitable distribution of urban green spaces, as observed in cities like Xi'an, China, exemplifies the environmental and social disparities arising from rapid urbanization (Peng et al., 2022). Strategic management offers a viable pathway to address these challenges by optimizing resource allocation processes through inclusive, data-driven, and participatory approaches (Osuji, 2024).

Despite progress in urban development initiatives, inequalities persist due to systemic flaws in resource allocation strategies. Marginalized populations face barriers to accessing quality education, affordable housing, and sustainable energy, exacerbating social inequities (Jafari et al., 2024). Urban sprawl in developing nations

has outpaced infrastructure planning, leading to informal settlements with limited access to basic amenities (Parekh, 2024). Moreover, the absence of transparent mechanisms in resource allocation undermines public trust and perpetuates inefficiencies (Ebbrecht & Chen, 2023). The limited integration of SDG principles into urban governance further compounds these challenges, as current approaches often prioritize economic growth over social equity, sidelining marginalized communities (Chitewere et al., 2023).

This study aims to examine how strategic management can advance equitable urban development in alignment with SDG 10. Specifically, it identifies barriers in urban resource allocation frameworks, synthesizes strategic approaches for inclusivity and transparency, and draws on selected illustrative examples to show how equity-oriented urban policies may be applied in practice.

This study contributes to the literature by developing a conceptual strategic management framework for equitable urban resource allocation in support of SDG 10. Unlike studies that examine urban inequality mainly from the perspective of infrastructure deficits or socio-economic exclusion, this review brings together insights from strategic management, stakeholder theory, the urban nexus approach, digital governance, and development finance. The paper argues that inclusive urban development requires coordinated planning, meaningful stakeholder participation, transparent resource allocation, appropriate technology use, and equity-focused monitoring systems. By synthesizing these perspectives, the study provides a policy-oriented framework that can guide governments, urban planners, development partners, and private-sector actors in designing more inclusive and accountable urban systems, particularly in developing-country contexts.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a narrative literature review approach to examine how strategic management can support equitable resource allocation in urban development and contribute to the achievement of SDG 10. A narrative review is appropriate for this study because the topic cuts across several fields, including strategic management, urban governance, development studies, sustainability, public policy, and technology-enabled planning. The purpose is not to conduct a formal systematic review or statistical synthesis, but to integrate major concepts, debates, and practical insights from relevant literature.

The review draws on peer-reviewed journal articles, books, policy reports, and selected institutional publications published mainly between 2018 and 2024. The literature was selected purposively based on its relevance to five key themes: strategic management and development, urban inequality, equitable resource allocation, participatory governance, and SDG-aligned urban planning. Additional attention was given to literature addressing developing countries and rapidly urbanizing contexts in the Global South.

The analysis followed a thematic synthesis approach. Selected literature was read and organized around recurring themes, including governance barriers, infrastructure inequality, stakeholder participation, technology-enabled transparency, development finance, and policy localization. Stakeholder theory and the urban nexus approach were used as guiding lenses for interpreting the literature. Stakeholder theory helped to examine the role of governments, communities, private actors, and civil society in urban decision-making, while the urban nexus approach supported analysis of the interconnections among land, water, energy, housing, and infrastructure systems.

To support the conceptual discussion, the review also draws on selected illustrative examples from China, India, South Africa, South Korea, and Nigeria. These examples were not treated as empirical case studies, but as practical illustrations of how strategic management principles may be applied in different urban contexts. The review therefore provides a conceptual and policy-oriented synthesis rather than primary empirical evidence.

As with all narrative reviews, this study has limitations. The selection of literature was interpretive rather than exhaustive, and the analysis does not claim to represent all studies on urban inequality or SDG 10. The review is also limited by its reliance on secondary sources. Future research should build on this synthesis through systematic reviews, comparative case studies, interviews with urban policy actors, and community-level empirical research.

# THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Strategic management provides a foundation for addressing societal challenges through structured decision-making and resource optimization. This section examines key theories such as stakeholder theory and the resource-based view, illustrating their relevance in tackling urban inequalities and promoting sustainable development.

***Strategic Management and Development:*** Strategic management involves the formulation and implementation of major organizational goals based on assessment of resources and internal and external environments. In urban development contexts, it offers tools for addressing societal challenges by aligning resources with long-term equity and sustainability goals (Das & Mondal, 2023). The resource-based view highlights the importance of leveraging unique urban assets to address disparities, while stakeholder theory emphasizes inclusive governance in strategic planning (Rezende et al., 2024). Adaptive strategies that incorporate real-time data analytics and participatory decision-making have proven effective in managing urban resources sustainably (Yang et al., 2020).

***Linking SDG 10 and Urban Inequality:*** SDG 10 aims to reduce inequality within and among countries by promoting equitable access to opportunities and resources. Urbanization serves as both a driver of development and a source of inequality, particularly in the Global South, where unplanned growth exacerbates disparities in housing, healthcare, and education (Butcher, 2020). Systemic barriers, including governance inefficiencies and inadequate infrastructure marginalize vulnerable populations (Bukowski & Kreissl, 2022). Operationalizing SDG 10 in urban contexts requires coordinated governance mechanisms that align local and national policies with global sustainability frameworks (Parekh, 2024).

***Conceptualizing Inclusive Development:*** Inclusive development ensures that all members of society, particularly marginalized groups, benefit from economic and social progress. A critical distinction between equity and equality underpins this approach: while equality aims for uniform resource distribution, equity considers the unique needs of different groups to achieve fair outcomes (Ghosh et al., 2022). Strategic management frameworks informed by development studies and urban planning offer practical pathways for inclusive urbanization. Participatory governance models that involve local communities in decision-making have demonstrated success in reducing inequalities and fostering social cohesion (Eliakimu & Mans, 2022). Innovations such as the Inequality and Poverty Assessment Model (IPAM) provide tools for evaluating disparities in urban resource allocation (Bukowski & Kreissl, 2022).

# CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES IN URBANIZATION

Urban inequality stems from deeply rooted structural barriers, ineffective resource allocation, and socio-economic dynamics. This section identifies critical challenges that hinder equitable urbanization and impede the realization of SDG 10.

***Structural Barriers:*** Urban inequality is rooted in historical and systemic structures that perpetuate disparities across generations. Institutional inefficiencies in urban governance frequently result in fragmented planning, leaving marginalized communities excluded from key resources and services. Uncoordinated urban policies in rapidly growing cities such as Lagos and Mumbai have exacerbated socio-economic divides, as governance systems struggle to address the needs of informal settlements (Bukowski & Kreissl, 2022). Historical patterns of discrimination, including redlining and unequal zoning, continue to shape urban landscapes (Chitewere et al., 2023). Siloed decision-making processes lead to underutilized budgets and misaligned priorities in housing and infrastructure provision (Das & Mondal, 2023).

***Resource Allocation Challenges:*** The uneven distribution of public goods and infrastructure is a pervasive issue in urban settings, particularly in the Global South. Studies in sub-Saharan Africa indicate that over 60% of urban dwellers reside in informal settlements with limited access to water, sanitation, and electricity, conditions exacerbated by unregulated urban growth (Peng et al., 2022). Resource allocation frameworks often fail to prioritize the most vulnerable populations, favoring economically affluent neighborhoods due to political and

financial pressures. Transparent and data-driven mechanisms are essential to guide equitable resource distribution (Rezende et al., 2024).

***Economic and Social Dynamics:*** Private sector interests significantly shape urban inequality through speculative land development and gentrification, displacing low-income residents to peripheral areas with inadequate infrastructure. Urban redevelopment projects in megacities like Jakarta and Cape Town have displaced thousands of residents, creating new pockets of poverty (Butcher, 2020). Rural-to-urban migration further strains urban systems, resulting in overcrowding and reduced service quality. Migrant populations frequently face social exclusion and lack representation in urban planning processes (Ghosh et al., 2022).

***Misinformation and Public Perception:*** Communication gaps between policymakers, the private sector, and local communities undermine collaborative urban development. Misinformation surrounding urban redevelopment projects has generated public resistance even when such projects target inequality reduction (Nae et al., 2024). Marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by these gaps, as they often lack access to transparent policy information. Digital tools including mobile applications and social media platforms can bridge these gaps by enabling real-time feedback and fostering accountability (Parekh, 2024).

## STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR EQUITABLE RESOURCE ALLOCATION

This section outlines a comprehensive framework for addressing urban disparities through strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and the use of metrics for progress tracking.

***Key Components of the Framework:*** Equitable resource allocation requires a framework that integrates three components. First, strategic planning aligns urban development with equity goals through multi-sectoral approaches and adaptive management, ensuring policies are inclusive and resilient to evolving urban demands (Mitra et al., 2020). The urban nexus approach links resource management across water, energy, and land to optimize equity and sustainability. Second, stakeholder engagement emphasizes participatory governance through co-creation workshops and deliberative forums, enabling local governments to build trust and address the specific needs of vulnerable populations (Chitewere et al., 2023). Third, metrics and indicators, particularly tools like the IPAM, provide actionable data for evaluating the spatial distribution of resources and ensuring accountability (Bukowski & Kreissl, 2022).

**Table 1:** Strategic Management Framework for Equitable Urban Resource Allocation

| Framework Component | Strategic Role | Equity Contribution |
|---|---|---|
| Strategic planning | Aligns urban development objectives with long-term equity, sustainability, and SDG 10 priorities. | Ensures that urban policies do not focus only on economic growth, but also address the needs of marginalized and underserved communities. |
| Stakeholder engagement | Involves local governments, communities, civil society, private actors, and development partners in planning and decision-making. | Improves participation, builds trust, and ensures that resource allocation reflects the lived experiences of vulnerable populations. |
| Data-driven technology | Uses tools such as GIS, digital monitoring systems, AI, and blockchain to identify service gaps, track resource flows, and improve transparency. | Supports more accurate targeting of underserved areas and reduces the risk of exclusion, corruption, and elite capture in urban resource distribution. |
| Development finance | Mobilizes public funding, private investment, blended finance, green bonds, and social impact financing for inclusive infrastructure. | Expands access to housing, sanitation, transport, energy, and other essential |

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|---|---|---|
| | | services for low-income and marginalized urban populations. |
| Monitoring and evaluation | Tracks equity outcomes through indicators, community feedback systems, and accountability mechanisms. | Ensures that urban interventions remain responsive, measurable, and aligned with inclusive development goals. |

The framework presented in Table 1 shows that equitable urban resource allocation requires more than the availability of financial and technical resources. It also requires strategic coordination among institutions, communities, and private actors. Strategic planning provides the overall direction by linking urban development priorities to SDG 10 and broader sustainability goals. Stakeholder engagement ensures that the voices of marginalized groups are included in decisions that affect access to housing, water, sanitation, transport, energy, education, and public space. Data-driven technologies strengthen the evidence base for decision-making by helping planners identify underserved locations and monitor the distribution of public resources. Development finance provides the investment required to implement inclusive infrastructure projects, while monitoring and evaluation systems help ensure accountability over time.

Together, these components form an integrated strategic management framework for inclusive urban development. The framework emphasizes that equity should not be treated as an additional policy concern, but as a central principle guiding urban planning, resource allocation, financing, implementation, and evaluation. When applied in developing-country contexts, the framework can help governments and urban managers move from fragmented service delivery toward more coordinated, transparent, and inclusive systems of urban governance.

***Operationalizing the Framework:*** Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are central to framework operationalization, mobilizing resources for affordable housing, transport, and digital services while maintaining social equity objectives (Parekh, 2024). Community-driven monitoring systems enable real-time policy feedback, fostering inclusivity and adaptability (Yu et al., 2024). Technology, including AI and big data analytics, enhances precision in resource distribution. India's Smart Cities Mission demonstrates how AI-driven tools can optimize service delivery and monitor disparities in real time (Rezende et al., 2024).

***Case Examples:*** In Xi'an, China, data-driven urban planning enabled more equitable distribution of green spaces by identifying underserved areas and directing targeted interventions (Peng et al., 2022). The urban nexus approach in South Korea demonstrated how integrated cross-sectoral management can reduce urban inequality through aligned water, energy, and land-use strategies (Mitra et al., 2020). India's Smart Cities Mission illustrates both opportunities and remaining challenges in incorporating equity into digital urban infrastructure.

## INNOVATIONS IN STRATEGIC URBAN MANAGEMENT

Emerging technologies and innovative governance models are transforming urban management practices, enhancing transparency, efficiency, and equity in resource allocation.

***Emerging Technologies:*** Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and blockchain technology lead the digital transformation of urban planning. GIS provides detailed spatial analysis, enabling planners to identify underserved areas and optimize resource distribution. Blockchain's decentralized ledger system strengthens urban governance by ensuring transparent and accountable management of public resources. Applications such as the BBBlockchain App have improved stakeholder engagement and reduced corruption in resource allocation (Ietto et al., 2022). The integration of blockchain with AI further enhances smart city solutions by addressing traffic congestion and energy management through real-time data (Purushothaman et al., 2024).

***Policy Innovation:*** Decentralized governance frameworks that leverage digital tools expand the participation of marginalized communities in policymaking. Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLTs) enable algorithmic governance through smart contracts, promoting transparency and inclusivity (Gloerich et al., 2020). Adaptive policies incorporating AI and IoT technologies allow urban managers to respond proactively to emerging disparities, ensuring resource allocation remains equity-aligned (Bagloee et al., 2021).

***Role of Development Finance:*** Strategic allocation of development finance ensures financial resources target the most vulnerable populations. PPPs have emerged as effective mechanisms for mobilizing investments in affordable housing and sustainable infrastructure (Rezende et al., 2024). Blockchain-enabled transparency in development finance reduces inefficiencies and fosters accountability (Srinivas et al., 2023). Innovative financing instruments such as green bonds linked to urban regeneration projects further demonstrate the potential of leveraging finance to address urban inequalities (Aditya et al., 2023).

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the preceding analyses, this section presents actionable recommendations for strengthening governance, fostering collaboration, and scaling local innovations to align urban development with equity-focused objectives.

***Strengthening Governance:*** Urban governance systems must evolve to prioritize equity in decision-making. Decentralizing governance empowers local institutions to address specific community challenges such as improving housing accessibility or expanding clean water infrastructure with tailored policy solutions (Beyene et al., 2023). Embedding transparency and accountability through citizen feedback mechanisms and governance indices, such as the UN-Habitat Urban Governance Index, ensures equitable resource outcomes (Croese et al., 2021). Urban master plans should incorporate equity-focused objectives aligned with the 2030 Agenda, ensuring marginalized populations gain access to essential services.

***Enhancing Collaboration:*** Multi-sectoral partnerships involving governments, private entities, and civil society are essential for addressing housing shortages, transportation inefficiencies, and resource disparities. Initiatives in the food-energy-water nexus demonstrate how shared governance models can optimize resource use while ensuring equitable outcomes (Kapucu et al., 2021). Aligning national strategies with global frameworks such as the Paris Agreement and the SDGs fosters coherence in urban development policy. Cape Town and Kisumu have successfully localized global frameworks by incorporating them into municipal policies (Croese & Duminy, 2022).

***Scaling Local Innovations:*** Grassroots innovations that reflect a deep understanding of localized challenges offer adaptive, context-sensitive strategies for addressing urban inequality. Participatory governance models in South African municipalities demonstrate how community-planner collaboration enhances resource allocation (Croese & Duminy, 2022). Community-driven monitoring systems that enable data collection on infrastructure and service gaps provide actionable insights for policymakers. The experience of Uyo, Nigeria, illustrates how community feedback has been instrumental in addressing housing insecurity (Essien, 2021). Governments and international agencies must provide sustained financial and technical support to amplify the reach of these grassroots initiatives.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The findings of this study carry distinct implications for developing nations, particularly low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, where urban inequalities are most acute and institutional capacity is often constrained. These implications span governance reform, financing strategies, technology adoption, and regional cooperation.

***Governance Reform in Low-Capacity Environments:*** Many developing countries face governance fragmentation, political instability, and weak institutional frameworks that undermine equitable urban management. Strengthening local governance through decentralization is a foundational step: empowering municipal and district authorities with dedicated budgets, technical capacity, and legislative mandates enables more responsive and context-sensitive urban planning. Countries such as Ghana and Tanzania have made incremental progress in fiscal decentralization, yet implementation gaps remain, particularly in peri-urban and rapidly growing secondary cities. Governance reforms should also prioritize anti-corruption measures and independent oversight bodies to ensure that resources reach intended beneficiaries rather than being captured by political or elite interests.

***Sustainable and Innovative Financing:*** Developing countries face chronic underfunding of urban infrastructure, necessitating diversified financing strategies. Governments should leverage blended finance mechanisms that combine concessional public funding with private investment to de-risk urban equity projects. Green bonds and social impact bonds, when linked to verifiable equity outcomes, can attract international capital for affordable housing, sanitation, and renewable energy in underserved urban areas. Development Finance Institutions (DFIs) such as the African Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank play a critical role in channeling affordable capital and providing technical assistance. National governments should also explore participatory budgeting mechanisms that directly involve communities in allocating urban funds, enhancing ownership and accountability.

***Context-Appropriate Technology Adoption:*** While technologies like GIS and blockchain hold significant promise, their adoption in developing countries must account for infrastructure limitations, digital literacy gaps, and cost constraints. Policymakers should prioritize open-source, interoperable platforms that can be deployed at low cost and scaled incrementally. Mobile-based GIS tools and SMS-driven community feedback systems offer accessible alternatives in settings with limited internet connectivity. Capacity-building programs for local urban professionals, combined with South-South technology transfer arrangements, can accelerate the uptake of appropriate digital solutions. Technology adoption strategies must also include digital inclusion safeguards to ensure that vulnerable groups, including women, the elderly, and informal sector workers, are not excluded from digital urban services.

***Regional and South-South Cooperation:*** Developing countries stand to benefit from structured South-South cooperation frameworks that facilitate knowledge exchange, joint capacity-building, and policy learning on equitable urban development. Regional economic communities, such as ECOWAS in West Africa and ASEAN in Southeast Asia, provide platforms through which cities can share best practices in participatory governance, inclusive planning, and technology-enabled resource management. Bilateral cooperation agreements should include provisions for urban equity, ensuring that cities in lower-income countries access proven innovations without needing to independently develop costly solutions. International development partners must align their support with nationally determined urban priorities rather than imposing standardized models that may conflict with local governance structures and cultural norms.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

***Practical Implications:*** The strategic management framework presented here offers actionable guidance for policymakers, urban planners, and private stakeholders. Policymakers should embed equity principles into governance structures by decentralizing decision-making through mechanisms such as Unit Committee systems, enabling tailored community-level interventions in housing, services, and infrastructure. Urban planners should adopt GIS for spatial analysis of infrastructure disparities and blockchain for transparent resource distribution records, as demonstrated by projects under India's Smart Cities Mission. The private sector's investment in affordable housing and renewable energy, channeled through accountable PPPs, is essential for expanding access to essential services. Civil society organizations contribute by implementing participatory governance mechanisms, including community feedback platforms that ensure policies remain responsive and accountable to evolving community needs. Effective implementation ultimately requires strong coordination among all stakeholders, with shared accountability mechanisms ensuring equitable outcomes.

***Implications for Further Research:*** This study highlights several gaps warranting future investigation. First, comparative empirical studies that directly test strategic management interventions across different governance systems are needed to establish causal evidence. Second, the long-term equity impacts of AI and blockchain in urban settings, particularly in developing countries, remain underexplored and merit longitudinal study. Third, interdisciplinary research integrating strategic management, development economics, and urban sociology would yield more comprehensive frameworks for inclusive urbanization. Fourth, further refinement of equity measurement tools, such as the IPAM, is needed to capture the dynamic, multidimensional nature of urban disparities across diverse city typologies.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined how strategic management can advance equitable urban development in alignment with SDG 10. Drawing on a narrative synthesis of literature and selected illustrative examples, five key insights emerge. First, participatory governance models which meaningfully include marginalized communities in decision-making consistently demonstrate effectiveness in reducing urban inequalities and building social cohesion across diverse national contexts. Second, digital technologies, particularly GIS and blockchain, significantly enhance the precision, transparency, and accountability of urban resource allocation, provided they are implemented with inclusivity safeguards. Third, multi-sectoral collaboration through PPPs and civil society engagement is indispensable for mobilizing the financial and technical resources required for equitable urban infrastructure. Fourth, sustainable alignment with SDG 10 requires deeper institutional reform: urban governance systems must move beyond growth-centric priorities to embed equity as a non-negotiable development objective. Fifth, equity in technology-driven urban development cannot be assumed; deliberate policy interventions are needed to ensure that digital innovations serve, rather than bypass, the most vulnerable urban populations.

These findings collectively affirm that strategic management, when applied with equity as a central value, offers a viable and transformative pathway for inclusive urbanization. The urgency of this task cannot be overstated. Without structural reform in governance, financing, and resource allocation, urbanization will continue to produce and deepen inequality rather than alleviate it.

The policy implications are especially significant for developing countries, where institutional capacity constraints and financing gaps demand creative, context-sensitive solutions. Governance decentralization, sustainable blended finance, appropriate technology adoption, and South-South cooperation emerge as priority levers for governments committed to advancing SDG 10.

Several directions for future research follow from this work. Scholars should conduct primary empirical studies, including community surveys and policymaker interviews to validate the proposed framework in specific national contexts. Longitudinal research is needed to assess whether technology-driven urban initiatives sustain equity gains over time. Comparative cross-country analysis of governance models would clarify which institutional configurations are most effective at reducing urban inequality. Finally, the development of refined, context-sensitive equity metrics would enable more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of SDG 10 progress in diverse urban settings. Sustained interdisciplinary inquiry, bridging strategic management, urban planning, and development studies, is essential to meeting the challenge of inclusive urbanization in the decades ahead.

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