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Rotterdam and Leicester Compared

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Abstract

This paper investigates multicultural policy and practice at local level, by focusing on the cases of Leicester and Rotterdam. The main question it answers is whether these cities have been proactive or rather reactive in dealing with the challenges posed by their multiethnic society. By addressing literature borrowed from sociology, political science, cultural studies and planning, it argues that while the Netherlands did not accept to be a country of immigration at first and only dealt with it in reaction to crisis situations, the UK soon accepted it and tried to devise proactive solutions. However, a further analysis demonstrates that the municipal practices of both cities have been evolving considerably towards a more proactive stance, which intends diversity as an opportunity and governing diversity as a process.

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1. Introduction

Diversity characterises the great majority of societies. Indeed, only 10 to 15% of world countries can be reasonably described as ethnically homogenous (Connor, 1994). With the end of the cold war, diversity has been further fostered by trans-border population movements (Dunne, Bonazzi 1995: 267; UNESCO, 1998). Then September 11th came. Diversity is now on top of the political agenda at European, national, regional and urban level (Entzinger, 2003a).

Many people fear the unknown brought along by the new "ethnoscape" (Appadurai, 1990: 7). Racist politics have highlighted these concerns (Jacobs, 1996; Dijkstra et al, 2001), to push towards political and cultural homogeneity, despite the extraordinary cultural interchange which characterizes Europe (Amin, 2003). There is another side to the coin. Following recent socio-economic and political development, cities are faced with the competition of urban centres. Hence they need to be dynamic, diverse and safe, in order to attract and retain footloose companies and highly skilled workers. (Van den Berg, 1987; Van den Berg, Braun, Van der Meer, Otgaar, 2001). Yet, the creation of a "sanitized" city space stands in stark contrast with the necessity of a diverse and dynamic urban structure capable of thrusting innovation (Romer, 1986; ENGIME, 2001).

The ENGIME network has been widely investigating around the topic of diversity and has pointed out that it is an opportunity for cities, if only they learn to manage it properly (ENGIME, 2001). The UNESCO MOST project (1998), on its side, has been reflecting on the ideological approaches for the management of diverse societies. Parekh (2000), Sandercock (1998) and Kymlicka (1994) have analysed diversity from a different angle. They have elaborated the principles of social justice, citizenship and community, the definition of which are thought of as crucial in the development of a multi-ethnic society. Another strand of research is represented by the work of cultural theorists, such as Qadeer (1997) and Young (1999). They advocate a politics of difference as a model of governance progressing towards an unoppressive city (Young, 1999). All of the above mentioned studies have rarely prescribe specific mechanisms to put their recommendations into place. Hence, this paper discusses how diversity can be effectively managed, by referring to the practices that Leicester and Rotterdam have adopted to cope with their diverse communities.

2. The study and its main research question

The main focus of the research is on the results of in-depth interviews carried out with local policy officers in Leicester and Rotterdam, from March to September 2003, to understand whether the municipalities have been proactive or reactive in dealing with immigration waves, but not only, as it will be pointed out later.

The theoretical framework of the study builds on the work by Dunn et al (2001) and Garbaye (2002) and recognises the following dimensions for the analysis of multicultural governance in Leicester and Rotterdam: policy developments, corporate culture and departmental practices, consultation services, participation of minorities in decision-making and community services, vision and leadership, communication policy, municipal and other actors, the municipality and the voluntary sector.

From a scientific point of view, this piece of research can be hardly thought of as a valid comparative exercise, considering the very different historical and institutional profile of the cities selected. However, it is academically sound, since it proposes to observe the overall approach of the municipalities, rather than their operational details. It should not be underestimated that Leicester and Rotterdam were chosen as case studies because they share a long history of immigration and a very peculiar so-

cial profile: their immigrant population almost outnumbers the native one.

3. Managing diversity in Europe

There has been considerable research on issues related to the management of diverse communities at national level. Inglis (1997) and Rex (1996) have suggested that multi-ethnic societies need to be managed accordingly and have proposed three models for their management. First, the assimilationist French model, envisages the full responsibility of ethnic minorities to incorporate into the society. Second, the German differentialist model proposes to deter ethnic conflicts, by eliminating or minimising contacts between the majority population and ethnic communities. Third, the multicultural model accepts the legitimacy of minorities' distinctiveness and allows them to retain their own cultural identity, by restructuring mainstream institutions in order to ensure equal access to municipal services. Of course, none of these models is static.

As concerns local policy, a number of countries, including Canada, the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands (Khakee and Thomas, 1995; Qadeer, 1997; Cross & Entzinger, 1988) have carried out studies of how local government cater for their diverse communities. However, there is a shortage of empirical studies addressing the effectiveness of urban multicultural policy and practice. Indeed, multiculturalism has often been praised in an uncritical way (Goldberg, 1994): while cultural theorists have rightly pointed out the root of injustice, they have not succeeded in giving an account of how to deal with them.

The paper presented here aims at contributing to fill the gap, by offering a comprehensive assessment of multicultural policy at local level, because cities are natural laboratories of diversity and it is there that the challenges of multiculturalism can be best observed (ENGIME, 2001; Rogers, 2000).

In presenting the results of semi-structured interviews, this piece of research complements the work of a handful of scholars who have extensively analysed policy developments in the Netherlands (Entzinger, 1988; Entzinger, 2003b; Campfens, 1978) and in the UK (Khakee, 1995; Khakee, 1999; Allen & Cars, 2001). It also builds on the reflections of an increasing body of literature on the modern city and the politics of difference. The paper argues that there is much more to diversity than it is usually thought (Kuper, 2002; Barry, 2001; Alibhai-Brown, 2000). Indeed, the popular culture-centred construct of diversity neglects alternative causes of group disadvantage, such as sexual orientation, religious beliefs (Modood, 2000; Glavanis, 2003; Scharf, 2003: 31), poor professional and educational achievements (Arend, 1996), indecent housing (Barry, 2001; Crowley, 2001), etc. There is nothing good in cultural diversity itself (Malik, 1996). It is not necessary to institutionalise it (Kuper, 2002). It is only important that we give a better reflection of the complex world we live in (Kuper, 2002), because diversity allows to compare and contrast different values, beliefs and lifestyles. As it will be discussed, the celebration of diversity is important, but it must not turn into the theatrical expression of a diversity which for the non-white majority often represents an inferno rather than a carnival (Sandercock, 1998). In fact, while events can be extremely important in celebrating cultures, they can also divert attention from "real" urgent problems and contribute to the disneyfication of minority groups (Fainstein, Gladstone, 1999; Ritzer, Liska, 1997). Diversity needs to be supported indeed, but only to allow for an open political dialogue.

3.1 National diversity policy for the management of multi-ethnic societies

It is a truism to say that in some policy domains it is difficult to prove policy effectiveness. Nevertheless, even the way issues are conceptualised can be instrumental in understanding policy goals (Borowski, 2000). Canada and Australia are excellent examples in this sense. They were in fact the first states to

adopt a multicultural vision and to translate it into an official multicultural policy, following an increasing awareness of the ineffectivenss of their assimilationist approach (Campfens, 1978) In the words of Van den Berg et al (1997: 13), "a vision is a prerequisite to integrate different policy aspects and to prevent inconsistencies (…) and it is an absolute condition for sustainable development". In line with their argument (Van den Berg et al, 1997), local multicultural policies in both countries have greatly benefited from the development of a state strategic framework and from a strong national political support. The latter have indeed allowed for a coherent policy formulation at lower level and have granted a strong scope for financial support to advance multicultural programmes.

Contrary to Canada and Australia, Sweden did not view itself as a country of immigration (Inglis, 1997). Despite extensive flows, the foreign born population, in 1993, was still substantially below that of Canada and Australia. It is the Finnish minority - the largest overseas group - which was crucial in the replacement of the early Swedish assimilation policy: once certain rights were granted to them, the claim was laid for other groups (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1983). The Swedish debate tends to rationalize the disparities on the labour market and in the educational system - and the deriving integration problems - in terms of cultural differences (Alund, Schierup, 1991). As a response to this, the national model strives towards a common "language" for mutual cultural understanding, formalized into concrete forms ready for Swedish consumption (Fred, 1983: 64). Regrettably, this approach threatens to eliminate culture as a creative social force.

Even if hardly applicable as an example to developed nations (Clammer, 1998), the case of Singapore is interesting because its style of multiculturalism is not to be found anywhere else in the world. It represents in fact the attempt at total social planning (Ackermann, 1997). Heterogeneity is conceptualised in three basic labels, which are a remnant of colonial administration and which still frame the nation building policy. These are multiracialism, multilingualism and multiculturalism (Siddique, 1990). Unsurprisingly, the consequences of this model are far-reaching. First, this approach heightens a sense of racial consciousness, while undermining alternative ways of understanding the society, through class and gender. Second, it implies clear boundaries between ethnic groups and therefore leads to the exclusion of a growing number of "in-betweens" (Braga-Blake, 1992: 23). The challenge for Singapore will be to adapt to a rapidly changing society, in which a relativity of values is the cultural form (Turner, 1990).

3.2 Urban diversity policy for the management of multi-ethnic societies

The existing literature argues that multiculturalism has a locally-specific meaning. This results in municipalities focusing on different policies, according to their own interpretation of the "problem" - as it is often defined.

Many cities believe that multiculturalism requires lending an ear to migrants' voices and ensuring their representation in the political spectrum. This is the case in Sweden, where thanks to public funds, an impressive network of organised immigrant associations has come into being. Through them important information and policy decisions can be communicated down to the grassroots (Fred, 1983). However, in practice, immigrants have very little political influence (Bjorklund, 1986). In fact, in order for associations to receive funding, they must be able to prove that they have no connection with religious or political interests and that they are pure ethnic groups. This clearly makes them into a form of social engineering, apt at controlling minorities' movements. Moreover, it denies them the opportunity of working towards more direct political participation (Alund, Schierup, 1991).

In 1989, in a similar line of thinking, the mayor of Marseille decided to institutionalise relations with minorities, by naming a local civil servant officially responsible for them. While institutionalisation might have contributed to a

more effective representation of migrants than in the Swedish case, there is a general feeling that these civil servants are rather symbolic and do not really take into account the needs of their constituencies. (Rogers et al, 2001). The institutionalisation of multiculturalism is indeed no cure-all solution to the successful management of multi-ethnic cities and the reality in Frankfurt confirms this assertion. The city has no specific multicultural policy, since local authorities are still focussed on the myth of return (Ackermann, 1997), but efforts were made in the 1990s to confront the question of integration. It was then that AMKA, the municipal department of multicultural affairs, was established, with the task of helping immigrants in their struggle for political rights. A foreign residents advisory board was set up as a result and this has clearly given political visibility to migrants. Yet, unless major policy changes occur at federal and European level and political rights are eventually granted to immigrants, "the foreign underclass" will be unlikely able to emerge.

Political rights should by no means be seen as the only priority in the management of multiculturalism and minorities' representation should not be considered as the only tool available for it. Alternative methods might be just as effective, as the Theatre-Forum of Marseille shows. This is an initiative which encourages residents of mixed neighbourhoods to write and stage plays, on the basis of their own experiences. Its interesting aspect resides in the exchange of roles and in audience participation, which help de-dramatizing daily life problems, all too often fuelled by racist outbreaks (Body-Gendrot, 2000). Such programmes however carry a risk. While theatrical performances can undoubtedly supplement educational activities in an entertaining way, they can easily lead to the "disneyfication of culture" (Ritzer, Liska, 1997), unless they are grounded in educative objectives.

Focusing on racism, it is interesting to point to the fact that many cities are still not taking affirmative actions to combat it. Ironically, racism is still very much entrenched within public institutions and this might become a plague for cities of extraordinary diversity, unless something concrete is done about it. Internal audits might represent a starting point for municipalities taking the issue seriously. This happens in Northern Ireland, where "policing the diverse society" is a key issue, particularly with the constant threat of religious conflicts. The reform has had the main objective of professionalizing the police, in order to raise the standards of impartiality. But racism in Belfast has also been the focus of other targeted projects, including joint-initiatives with the media, to ensure minorities are not demonised in news reporting (Jacobs, 2000).

Another alternative mode of engaging in multicultural politics is that of intervening in the public space. There is an emerging consensus that it is there in fact that "the negotiation of difference" occur and that people come to terms with their diversity (Allen and Cars, 2001). Unfortunately, the reality portrays a divergent picture: urban public spaces are often occupied by particular groups or function as mere transit nodes where strangers have little contact (Amin and Thrift, 2002; Rosaldo, 1999). This is not to underestimate those actions which attempt at making public space inclusive and pleasant. It is only to point to the fact that these initiatives are often mislead into the search for safe environments, in which, the marginalized and the prejudiced stay away (Amin, 2002). Hence, more interaction is needed in "micropublics" (Les Back quoted in Amin, 2002), that is to say in spaces of habitual engagement, including youth centres, sport clubs, schools (Sennett, 1999). Yet, local authorities can of course have only little power in this sense, considering that the organisation of activities within this spaces falls mostly outside their responsibility public institutions.

It is from outside Europe that some of the most advanced and integral examples of local multicultural policies come. In particular, the Australian experience teaches us is that the overall effectiveness of multiculturalism does not depend on single policy initiatives but on the cumulative effects of a range of policies

and institutional developments (Alibhai-Brown, 1999). Indeed, South Wales councils policies relate to culturally sensitive recruitment and to staff training, but not only (Dunn et at, 2001). Some councils have programmes for accrediting bilingual staff as language aides and plain English policies are widely used by departments. Adding to this, councils have introduced a variety of mechanisms in consulting with local communities, including liaison officers, forums, workshops and advisory committees, to ensure that all members of the community can be reached out for and that their needs are better understood. Community relations' departments are instead described as having a more celebratory role in addressing cultural diversity. But Australian councils reported two main difficulties in introducing multicultural measures. First, access and equity policies tend to disappear when a project worker's contract expires or when a liaison officer is moved to a different department. Second, financial constraints often deter the introduction of multicultural policies, which some departments still see as "ancillary" to council's priorities. Interestingly, Cutts (1992) and Fincher (1998) discuss that the implementation of culturally sensitive policies may simply require a clever reorganisation of council resources and some exiguous costs for additional community consultation.

Finally, a few more lines need writing about the Canadian multicultural approach to planning policy and community participation. Both Vancouver and Toronto have led in facilitating the participation of ethnic communities in the making of official plans, by setting up "citizens' circles" in neighbourhoods and by inviting associations, as well as individuals to articulate their needs and goals. Not to be underestimated is also the existence of various family and women's centres which specialize in counselling South Asian women. This suggests that the country's concept of diversity does not have a racial bias, but allows for issues such as gender to enter the political agenda. There is yet a negative side to the picture: the bias of Canadian universalistic standards. In fact, contrary to Kymlicka (2000) who praises it as the "perfect model" for multiculturalism, Porter (1995) is very critical of the country's model, since planning policies originate from the socio-cultural patterns of the dominant communities (Fitzduff, 2000). The consequence, as he indicates, is that the country's mosaic is organised vertically with the English as the top layer. Moreover, policies are left to ad-hoc interventions and the requirements of ethnic groups are accommodated through amendments and special provisions to statutory plans. Evidently, the country would need to entrench its human rights code in planning policies and to make cultural and racial discrimination a legitimate basis for planning appeals (Qadeer, 1997).

4. An overview of policy developments

4.1 Leicester policy developments

There is no official definition of "ethnic minority" either in Leicester or in the UK. However, according to national statistics, 95% of all UK ethnic minorities are UK citizens with full personal and political rights (Garbaye, 2002). Welfare rights are instead not granted to a level comparable to that in the Netherlands (Esping-Anderson, 1985).

Contrary to France and other countries where immigrants arrived as "guest workers", immigration in Britain was unorganised (Freeman, 1979) and it was assumed that foreign British passport-holders would simply become British. It might relate to this fact that the disadvantages of minorities have always been regarded as similar to those of other underfunctioning groups and that the need for an ethnic minorities policy was not addressed for a long time. Yet, from 1918 to 1945, Black people in Britain were refused housing and services, because they were regarded as racially inferior and undeserving in social welfare terms (Jacobs, 2000). Moreover, up to Thatcher times, policing was actively used as a form of social control towards them, since they

were identified as a source of disorder and criminality (Khakee et al, 1995). Later, in 1999, with the publication of the Macpherson report, the need was highlighted to review council departments' records on race equality and to combat institutional discrimination (Huw, 2000).

But what has been happening in Leicester? It was after world war II that mass migration into Leicester escalated to feed the textile, shoe, health and transport industries (Winstone, 1996). But it was between 1968 and 1975 that the real transformation of Leicester took place: its ethnic minority population grew from 5% to 25% (Leicester City Council, 1983) and generated a racist backlash in the form of electoral support for the National Front. Racial tensions climaxed in a riot, at the end of the 1970s, (Winstone, 1996), which was fuelled by the failure of ethnic minorities to be accorded a legitimate place in British society and to overcome the socio-economic problems they were experiencing (Layton-Henry, 1992; Cohen, 1994).

The brief account of immigration policy developments so far does not make justice to British immigration policies, which have been more proactive than in other countries. A fist crucial attempt to create harmony among all ethnicities was made in 1976, with the introduction of the Race Relation Act (Cross and Entzinger, 1988). Its aim was that of eradicating discrimination from the provision of housing, employment and education.

Focussing on Leicester, the 1980s can be defined as the constructivist years. In 1982, the Council set up a race relations unit, in 1983 the first Asian councillors were elected and in 1987 twice as many foreign councillors joined the political force (Leicester Council, 2003a). By 1995, all mainstream parties had ethnic candidates (Winstone, 1996; Crowley, 2001).

The 1990s were the consolidation years of Leicester. Its minority population reached 28.1%, a large number of British born Asians graduated at De Montford University, Diwali festivities grew and the Muslim community began to emerge as a growing political and economic reality. Importantly, the first British Council of Race Relations was set up in Leicester in 1992 (Leicester Council, 2003a).

Immigration has not ceased and is expected to continue into the next decade. However, a new trend has been detected in the last few years: the arrival of an increasing number of Somalis and Dutch people. Currently, ethnic minorities represent approximately 35% of the total population and are expected to become a majority by 2011 (Leicester Council, 2003c).

Currently the debate on multiculturalism centres around the idea of "community cohesion", which derives from the work of the Cantle team, following the riots in northern cities. The notion has recently become popular in political debates and it was elaborated as a construct aiming at "combating exclusion and minimising the possibility of any event, acting as a catalyst which might then result in a break down of law and order" (Cantle, 2001: 15). While there has been a shift from identifying the multi-ethnic city as the locus of social problems, many issues remain to be solved in terms of racial harassment, institutional racism and minority disadvantage. Indeed, "it is not a coincidence that access for minorities to the social rented sector has improved at a time when the sector has lost its status and desirability, by becoming a tenure for residual groups" (Khakee et al, 1999). In addition, the constant vying between political parties about which is tougher on asylum numbers is particularly disappointing in a country which has had experience of the devastating consequences of the Powell's numbers game.[1]

4.2 Rotterdam policy developments

In the 1980s the status of "minority group" was given only to those groups which were considered to be disadvantaged from a socio-economic point of view and for which the government felt a special responsibility. These included groups arriving from former colonies or recruited under the guest worker schemes (Entzinger, 2003b). The same definition is still used nowadays. However, a debate has risen

on whether those whose conditions have considerably improved should move to a different category, to allow for upward mobility. Civil and social rights have been granted to foreigners over time. Political rights are still seen as a privilege of Dutch people. Nevertheless, since 1985, all non-nationals who have lived in the country for 5 years are agreed the right to vote in local elections (Michon, Tillie, 2002).

The Netherlands did not accept to be a country of immigration at first. Settlement was thought of as temporary, therefore efforts towards immigrants' assimilation were left mostly to the private sector (Campfens, 1978). Furthermore, the government assumed that meeting migrants' needs meant looking at housing, health and social issues through the mobilisation of the welfare system, intended as a form of social control (Cross, Entzinger, 1988). Public intervention built on principle of "pillarisation", which is based on the idea that every subculture must control its own infrastructure, in order to ensure the achievement of a national political consensus (Enzensbergen et al, 2001). Many remnants of this system have persisted till the present day, including for instance the Dutch system of private broadcasting associations (Cross and Entzinger, 1988).

As far as Rotterdam is concerned, immigration waves, particularly from Dutch colonies, increased considerably after the Second World War (Veenman, 2001; Reijnierse, 2003). From the mid 1980s onwards larger groups of refugees appeared from countries such as Iraq and Iran, former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Sierra Leona (Reijnierse, 2003,). Many settled on a permanent basis, contrary to what was expected by the government. The "accommodating policy" (Veenman, 2001) helped immigrants staying attuned with their own communities (Arend, 2002), but their successful assimilation was due to pre-migration characteristics, rather than to active policy (Campfens, 1978).

The economic downturn of the 70s and early 80s led to a virtual stop in the recruitment of foreign labour force (Arend, 1996). An anti-deprivation policy phase followed, in the endeavour to improve the socio-economic situation of minority groups, since they were not going to leave the country and yet the rate of unemployment among them was rather worrying.

The next policy phase, stretching into the 1990s, was embedded in the concept of citizenship, with the mounting evidence that the traditional socio-economic approach was creating dependency. As an alternative, the council recommended putting more emphasis on education and employment policies and intervened with some affirmative actions such as the introduction of compulsory Dutch language courses for immigrants. (Veenman, 2001).

In 1998, the municipality started to realised how the city had been considerably changing in recent decades, as reflected in the ever growing of homosexuals openly propagating their sexual orientation; of ethnic minorities choosing to live in the Netherlands whilst retaining their identities; etc. Hence, the "Programma Veelkleurige Stad" - the multicoloured city program, was launched (Ortega-Martijn, Sonnenschein, 2003). This represented a first step towards diversity management and lead to the development of the Rotterdam DiverCity programme. The latter centred around the wish of making diversity visible in the workforce, in processes and products, while anticipating the changing composition of the population (Ortega-Martijn, Sonnenschein, 2003).

In the early months of 2000 Pym Fortuyn entered on the political scene. He run for parliament with a new party and was also the front man of a new local right wing party, Liveable Rotterdam (Reijnierse, 2003).He won the elections in Rotterdam thanks to its capacity of expressing residents' fears for the increase of migration flows and criminal incidents in the city (Walker, 2001). Arguably, this lead to a renewed focus of the council on crime prevention. Yet, while national government seems to work on the assumption of the dualism migration-criminality, such dualism has not yet been made explicit in Rotterdam policies (Entzinger 2003a).

On June 20th 2003, celebrations took place for the ending of the "multicoloured city programme". On this occasion, the mayor pointed out that diversity still has a saliency for the council. Indeed, Rotterdam has an immigrant population of approximately 45% of the total population (Reijnierse, 2003; Entzinger, 2003c) and the percentage is set to increase.

5. Leicester and Rotterdam: policies and practices compared

While this paper does not concentrate on the principles of multiculturalism, it is necessary to make a few remarks on social justice and citizenship, since they represent the basis on which any debate on multiculturalism has developed. 95% of non-nationals in the UK are citizens with fully granted political rights, while many non-nationals in the Netherlands are still awaiting their citizenship status and can only vote in local elections. This has clearly an impact on the extent to which minorities can effectively put forward their interests. In addition, non-nationals' access to welfare benefits in both the UK and the Netherlands is still very much related to citizenship (Garcia, 2003; Silver, 1996). With a difference. The voluntary sector has been recognized as having a crucial role in the delivery of social justice in the Netherlands and this will be affecting considerably the evolution of distributive powers.

5.1 Consultation services

The literature review suggested that informal advisory boards as well as intermediary agencies have successfully addressed minorities' lack of access to political rights, by giving them a voice. Similarly, effective consultation channels have granted minorities' participation in policy-making both in Leicester and Rotterdam. Specific participatory structures have been built in Leicester within the council itself, including the People's panel, which brings together residents to get feedback on the quality and delivery of services, and Best Value review's groups. Importantly, policy-related information are also widely disseminated through leaflets and dedicated web pages translated in different languages. In Rotterdam, instead, consultation structures have been mostly opened up at district and neighborhood level. An interesting example is the council's joint-initiative with Stimulans – a regional NGO – which aimed at increasing the turnout at elections among immigrants (Van Rhee, 2002; LIA, 2001). This has involved the organisation of political cafe, in cooperation with minority organisations and migrant candidates, and the broadcasting of elections in 6 different languages. Trainings were also arranged for migrant organisations to carry out this role. The DiverCity programme has taken consultation even more seriously, by devising a participatory bonus to stimulate minority groups to develop ideas for their city.

5.2 The representation of minority groups

Giving its large minority population, it comes as no surprise that all parties in Leicester support the interests of ethnic minorities (Winstone, 1996). Labour is the party most Black and Asian Britons have traditionally voted for (Alibhai-Brown, 1999) and it lead the council for 24 years. With last year's council elections, however, no party was left with overall control and a new administration is now running, as the result of a joint Liberal-Democrats/Conservatives agreement (Leicester City Council, 2003c). The majority of Rotterdamers have also historically supported the Labour party (Veenman, 2001). But the right constituency slowly grew and peaked with 14% votes, in 1994.

Interestingly, the electoral system of both cities is conducive to minority representation in itself. The Dutch proportional system allows voters to choose for any candidate on the list of their preferred party and not only for the first one. In the borough of Feyenoord, this has facilitated four of the twelve ethnic minorities' candidates in moving to a higher position, from where they could be voted. The British system

is likewise instrumental in supporting foreign candidates, as each urban ward constitutes an electoral zone and minorities are often concentrated in specific urban areas (Garbaye, 2002).

5.3 Corporate policy and departmental practices

Leicester recently undertook a revision of its race equality arrangements. This lead to the creation of a single corporate equality team and to the introduction of a new race officer in each council department. It is clearly positive that race equality does not rest any longer in the hand of a single race equality unit. Ideally, this will ensure that race equality issues are dealt with at both corporate and departmental levels. Prior to these improvements, there existed a disadvantaged unit, a women unit and a unit for race equality. Following restructuring these are all gone. It is questionable of course whether women and disadvantaged groups will still be given the same priority within council objectives. In Rotterdam city council diversity has been institutionalised with the appointment of diversity managers. Their task involves: supporting their team, planning budgets, developing the diversity programme, auditing community needs relating specifically to diversity, organising and conducting trainings for managers and supporting departments in their operations. The mission statement of diversity teams evolves around the recognition of societal diversity and the understanding that accommodation of the latter can potentially contribute to enhancing the quality of urban life. Curiously, diversity teams are not part of the formal municipal structure, but only of the department for which they work. Yet, they are accountable to the municipality as far as diversity auditing is concerned. 95% of departments have to start the implementation of the diversity programme by 2005 and 60% of them have the same deadline to become diversity proof. In spite of these targets, goals seem to be loosely defined. This is particularly true following the completion of the diversity programme. This is why, DiverCity developed some tools to make departments self-supporting. To name a few: a serial book, a dedicated website and specific trainings for officers. Importantly, with the creation of the new dual system, the administration of the executive and the city council have been completely separated. The decision-making process now starts with the former which is accountable to the executive and which takes the lead whenever policy gaps are identified. This department makes proposals to the city council, with the support, if necessary, of an informal body: the municipal commission for multicultural affairs. The latter takes the final decision and, if it is positive, the executive takes on the implementation phase, with much more ample discretionary powers than earlier.

Departmental practices are also a good reflection of multicultural goals. Leicester and Rotterdam have likewise introduced a number of measures, ranging from staff trainings, to fair recruitment policies, to communication strategies. But there is a overarching tool which concretizes diversity in Leicester: the racial equality action plan. This contains a number of non-statutory measures which departments are expected to implement, including a managerial pack on race equality, a training on the implementation of management guidelines and on recruitment standards, a regular symposium for senior managers on how tackle institutional racism and an agreed training on race focused learning for all levels of employees. Yet, they undoubtedly represent an important component of diversity management.

Beyond training, equality measures in Leicester are applied to recruitment standards. The balanced recruitment panel ensures that minority groups are represented in staff composition. More attention on recruitment is taken by police departments (Idea, 2003) following the increase in recorded racist incidents from 219, in 1998-1999, to 595, at the beginning of 2001-2002 (Idea, 2003). Moreover, considering they are underrepresented at senior managerial level, a programme for “women into management” is occasionally organised by the

council (Idea, 2003). Interviewees did not show much enthusiasm for such programmes. They argued that while they provide for affirmative action, they fall short of an appropriate statutory structure to support fair recruitment. Furthermore, they pointed to the fact that the hierarchy of jobs is still clearly coloured: the higher the whiter it gets. With the 1996 Employment Equity Act, written on the Canadian example, every department, in Rotterdam, is required to prepare an annual report on its ethnic minority staff. The aim is to ensure their percentage compares positively to the correspondent labor population in the region, but the practice is not compulsory. The last report of the department of socio-economic affairs stated that approximately 19% of employees were from minority ethnic background and it positively compared with 15.5%, indicated as the correct proportion for the region. In order to address the shortage of managerial positions for migrants, the council introduced also a positive discrimination policy, whereby a certain percentage of minorities is to occupy particularly high positions in the decision-making ladder, so that they can have a real saying in policy-making. It should not be underestimated that the municipality can also count on diversity managers to acquire informal advice on recruitment policies and on an ethnic minority personnel committee to revise departmental practices.

But more is needed for multicultural policies to be effective: institutions need to move away from a functional approach, to ensure that the challenges of multiculturalism are tackled at all policy levels and in all policy fields. In this sense, all policies in Leicester, including culture, employment, housing, etc. are embedded in the tradition of equal opportunities and they all start confronting the need to foster community cohesion, the key concept through which Leicester is currently looking at multiculturalism. In Rotterdam, despite the encouragement of the DiverCity team to do so, the debate has not fully penetrated all policy fields. However, since 1998, diversity teams and change agents have been given a specific training on diversity. Such training has been recently extended to the heads of departments and, where diversity managers plead, to other staff too.

Through the institutionalisation of multiculturalism new needs have been identified from within the population. Oddly enough, councils have understood that the requirements of the white majority necessitate more researching since, according to surveys, they feel increasingly neglected. This is particularly revealing and it brings attention back to the fact that multiculturalism is not just about minorities, but about the whole population, to whom the white majority also belongs. At the same time, councils are acknowledging the risk of mainstream politics becoming more polarized and are therefore pushing against provision for separate funding, in the attempt to prevent further divisions and to create an inclusive idea of community. This might represent a successful alternative approach in that it encourages to look at every resident as a unique customer and to provide him/her with the services that will be considered as adequate to his/ her individual wishes, regardless of skin-colour, origin, nationality, gender, culture and religion. However, time will demonstrate whether this new philosophy is merely an ideological artefact or if it has instead the capacity of impacting positively on policy outcomes. Another recent advancement in Leicester relates to the raising awareness that it is useless to provide for minority and disadvantaged groups' needs, unless steps are made towards their empowerment. It is indeed believed that only if minorities are put in the position of catering for themselves, they will be able to move up the socio-economic ladder and to sustain their progress in the long-term. This is still however unlikely to happen at a time when these groups are short of means to make their voices heard (Cantle, 2001). Importantly, the council has become aware of the fact that youngsters are a particularly underprivileged group and yet they represent the future urban generation. Therefore, following the publication of the Cantle report, the municipality has been deploying more resources towards their capacity build-

ing. Last but not least, it is worth noticing that at the moment, educational policies are gradually gaining more and more importance in both Leicester and Rotterdam, since they are understood as a major force towards structural integration. In Rotterdam this has been happening mainly with the introduction of compulsory Dutch courses for minority groups, in the belief that structural integration can only happen when they can speak the language fluently. In Leicester, educational goals, which have become priority number one for the council, relate more to multicultural education. Data has shown that that multi-ethnic schools are the best performing in the city and that they help combat racist stereotypes, while leading pupils to the acceptance that the world they live in is made up of very different individuals whom sooner or later they will have to interact with and whose culture deserve equal respect and appreciation.

5.4 The importance of a corporate vision and of leadership

The development of a corporate vision is paramount for the effectiveness of institutional practices. Indeed, the effectiveness of diversity policies in Australia and Canada has been threatened by the devolution of responsibility for the latter to specific departments, which were left unguided in the absence of a clear corporate direction. In this context, it is remarkable to notice that Leicester minority politics is part of a corporate vision, embedded in the local code of governance and implemented through the corporate equality group. This arrangement has ensured that minority politics inform all departmental efforts, while steering the council's political vision. In Rotterdam, the situation is somehow confused at the moment: the DiverCity programme had the potential of guiding the corporate philosophy of the council, but, with its completion last June, it is not sure how it will progress beyond the goals set for 2005. In fact, the Australian case shows that policies tend to disappear when a project worker's contract expires. It derives that strong leadership will represent the crucial ingredient for the advancement of multiculturalism in the city. In fact, unless political will is strong, policy goals can hardly be pursued, particularly at a time of increasing financial squeeze. In Leicester, council objectives are very clear and diversity is not only one of them but is also defined as a priority. To validate this point, it is enough to analyse council's priorities, including diversity, safety, education and regeneration, and to notice how these are strictly linked to equality issues. Interestingly, in 2002, Leicester city council was even awarded the Beacon Council Status for Equality – an award given by the department for the environment, transport, local government and the regions to the best performing British councils. While it is expressed in terms of diversity rather than equality, minority politics in Rotterdam seems to be also a political priority: during the celebration for the end of the "Multi-coloured City programme" the Mayor asserted that diversity will still be very important in the local political agenda.

The importance of leadership becomes even more clear when focusing on budgetary arrangements. Leicester city council appears to have a very limited budget, drawing mainly from public sector funding. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of money is being devoted to minority issues (Leicester City Council, 2003c), even though figures were not provided by the interviewees to support this argument. Funding constraints seem to be less of an issue for Rotterdam city council, where officers do not recognise it as the main problem in the advancement of minority politics. In particular, the diversity management programme has been almost completely financed through the "Groot Stedebeleid", a special national fund for big cities, while the council only contributed with a limited budget to pay the staff wages.

The fact that leadership is mainly exercised from the white community does not seem to involve that migrants' interests are not fully understood. This possibly relates to the fact that a considerable percentage of lower level

workforce in Leicester comes from ethnic minority background: a quarter of councillors and 20% of the workforce are from (Idea, 2003). In addition, it is significant to report that Leicester was the first council to respond to the Lawrence inquiry and to accept and work on the plague of "institutional racism". Since then, minority politics has been guided by experienced professionals and specialists (Winstone, 1996). Similarly, in Rotterdam, 17% of civil servants are immigrants, as a result of the Equity Employment Act (Reijnierse, 2003). Moreover, while this does not positively compare to Leicester, 2 migrants were elected in the city council between 1994 and 1998. And they increased to 8 between 1998 and 2002 (Michon, Tillie, 2002).

5.5 Communication strategies

Leicester city council has made its multicultural policy aims very clear in all its strategic documents. But such documentation is not very accessible to the community, since it makes for a rather complex read and many people are not even aware of its existence. While communication is all too often intended as making policy goals transparent, a more appropriate analysis needs to look at it from a qualitative perspective. In this regard, one of the community plan's objectives is to promote the contribution ethnic minorities have made to Leicester society, not only by mentioning it in council documents, but also by calling for the support of the local foreign media. In fact, the latter are encouraged to develop sensitive reporting practices, whereby a balance is achieved between positive and negative news and minorities are not victimised nor demonised. Needless to say, positive communication has the potential of highlighting the goods of multiculturalism to counterbalance the frequent exaggeration of its negative sides.

In Leicester, a communication unit has been created within the chief executive office, with the main task of preparing press releases and of advising departments on their community strategies. However, the initiative of individual policy officers is essential in the compilation of the strategies themselves. The main points that they generally stress upon are the use of translation services and of plain English formulas, to overcome the jargon barrier faced by the community. Rotterdam departments have their own communication strategies too. These have been written by diversity teams in co-operation with the communication department and, as a result, communication has become more diversity proof. For instance, different communities are consciously addressed as "we" rather than "they", in the attempt to stress on inclusiveness. Not only. Efforts have been made to search for new effective forms to communicate. For instance, health authorities have organised seminars to inform young Cape-Verdians on HIV related issues. Overall, communication between the community and the council has been increasing through products of direct communication, such as the "Rotterdam post", a monthly newspaper translated in Turkish, Moroccan/Arabic and Capeverdian/Portuguese and sent to 27,000 households; brochures and letters translated into various foreign languages and community group meetings.

Arguably communication does not only happen though words, but also through actions. In both cities, refugees and gypsies are still downgraded to the status of "denizens". While they are not explicitly defamed, policy goals appear to point to this direction. And it is enough to recall the UK and the Dutch refugees dispersal policy to understand it. The latter has indeed its rationale in the conviction that by spreading refugees over the country, riots will be deterred and communities will be more tolerant because they will not feel overwhelmed by their presence. Then Pim Fortuyn arrived. One of the quotes which made him into a popular politician described Islam as a backward culture. Without debating on the morality of such a statement, it can be conferred that it spread an idea of Muslims as "undeserving citizens".

Clearly, communication needs improving in both cities. An initial step for improvement

would be to build on good practice. Second, the community could be placed under the obligation to respect a constitutionally enshrined system of fundamental multicultural rights, which would legitimise the existence of minority communities and would pave the way towards a renewed recognition of their equal dignity and respectability. Third, a multicultural education system could have the power of awakening both young and mature people to the new diverse face of the cities in which they live and to grow their understanding of the need for a multicultural policy. Fourth, intercultural communication should continue to have a crucial role in dispelling fears, misunderstandings, prejudice and ignorance.

5.6 Other actors

5.6.1 National government and ist political support for multiculturalism

Urban policy remits in both countries are very much distinct from national ones, which are primarily preoccupied with the strategic aspect of minority policy. In contrast to Canada and Australia, neither the UK nor the Netherlands have a national multicultural policy. Two main national agencies are responsible for minority related issues in the UK: the Home Office and the Commission for Racial Equality. The former is especially concerned with immigration, crime and policing, but has devoted increasing attention to community cohesion, since the establishment of a dedicated unit. The Commission for Racial Equality, as it name indicates, deals mainly with issues relating to equality and discrimination. Importantly, it connects with the so-called Racial Equality Councils and in doing so it creates a continuum, down to the local level, in the fight against racism. The Dutch national government has a similar role of that in the UK. Responsibility for immigration and integration used to lie with the ministry of interior, since policies are very much implemented at the local level. Currently, both policy fields appear to be the leading threat to law and order in society and this is possibly the rationale which has justified their recent transfer to the ministry of justice. In turn, the ministry has developed links with the Rotterdam commissioner for social integration. What is missing however in the Netherlands is the equivalent of the UK Commission for Racial Equality. Nonetheless, there exist some bcal agencies, such as Radar, which take up this role at least to some extent, by advising on anti-discrimination policy and on codes of behaviour (Radar, 2002).

Clearly if Leicester and Rotterdam could count on an agreed national framework, policy goals would be more coherent and could be strengthened both at the national and local level. It should be pointed out however that despite the fact that Dutch municipalities seem to resent from the fact that they are left little room for local manoeuvre, Rotterdam has been traditionally very proactive in bringing forward its priorities, even in the absence of national support. It is questionable though whether a national framework would allow Rotterdam to advance its current policies at a time when the ministry responsible for integration is suggesting a strong connection between crime and migration and pushes towards assimilation as the ultimate solution to foster safer communities. It was in fact reported that the city's policies are still very much geared towards integration, notwithstanding debates on the merits of this approach and the increasing threat of the dualism crime-migration infiltrating local politics.

5.6.2 Partnership with the voluntary sector

Van den Berg et al. (1997) acknowledge partnership as an overriding element capable of enhancing decision powers and of steering diversity management. While the primary research concentrate on the local level, it was thought of as interesting to investigate, even if only superficially, the links municipalities have developed with the third sector. In fact, partnership is crucial, because it permits for the advancement of residents' interests and for the development of their social capital, which is

increasingly looked at as one of the essential elements of a successful community. The voluntary sector plays a central role in this context, since it supports norms of reciprocity and engagement, by building social trust and networks of social relations that can be mobilised for civic action (Putman, 2000). Of course, this can only happen if the voluntary sector is not too occupied in filling the gaps left by public institutions' service provision. In Leicester, partnership with the latter has long been recognised as crucial in dealing with diversity (Leicester City Council, 2003d). As part of a new governance strategy, the council is developing new links with a multitude of local actors and this is in fact proving very effective in ensuring multiculturalism is kept high on the political agenda with the support of both the private and the public sector. What is exceptional about Leicester is the number of organisations specifically dealing with diversity: the multicultural advisory group, the Council of Faith and the Leicestershire economic partnership, to name a few.[2] Since Thatcher's time, partnership has been made into a criteria to access funding. This principle has become even stronger nowadays: 400 voluntary organisations were counted in the city, in 1996. The majority were created as a result of the failure of mainstream services to deal with minorities and tend to be still funded along ethnic lines (Idea, 2003). Unfortunately, they find it more and more hard to survive because of budget constraints and as a result their capacity building potential is under severe pressure. In Rotterdam, migrant organisations exist since the 1970s and were generally born out of individual initiative. They are given their goals by the council's relevant departments and they are ultimately responsible to a board which is accountable to the city council. In particular, they have been working on issues such as: the provision of facilities for volunteers, the provision of social services to immigrants, research, evaluation plans, SOS- telephone line for women, cultural projects, training for entrepreneurs and mentoring projects for young people with multiple problems (Reijnierse, 2003). An example of a local voluntary agency is Stimulans NGO foundation, an umbrella body encompassing two organisations working respectively for a migrant workers' groups, including Turkish, Moroccans and Cape Verdians and for a Surinamese migrant workers' group. Its objective is to promote the integration, emancipation and participation of its target groups in mainstream of Dutch society. This derives from the understanding that the problem of non-participation by minority members is the result of cultural and social barriers in the host society. In light of the long tradition of Dutch voluntary agencies, it would be important for the city council to reconsider existing partnership arrangements and build a stronger relationship with them. Indeed, there will be soon an evaluation of the subsidy relationship between these organisation and the local government. The DiverCity programme has already made progress in this context with the signature of 15 contracts between the departments and voluntary agencies. But the question is whether this will continue to happen now that the programme has come to an end.

6. Leicester and Rotterdam: two municipalities pro-acting on diversity

It should be clear by now that a country's response to multiculturalism is strongly influenced by its immigration history and by the degree to which migrants have succeeded to integrate. Walzer (1983) also states that distributive justice in the sphere of welfare and security refers to the recognition of need and membership. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that it was only in the 70s, when its immigrant population grew from 5% to 25%, that Leicester was acknowledged as a multicultural city. And it was only later, following the raising of a racist black-lash and the escalation of riots, that the council realized it was time to take action. Many politicians still prefer to placate rather than tackle prejudice and racism, suggesting that the city is not yet fully aware of the benefits of a proactive approach. However,

there are signs pointing to a policy shift: much more attention is being placed on listening to "the voices from the borderland", thanks to monitoring tools. Particular hope is cast on Best Value reviews, a new arrangement which places local authorities under the duty of delivering services of a certain standards. It is rather worrying that the programme does not specifically stress on social justice and equal opportunity and that it places a lot of attention on value for money (CPS, 1997). But there are reasons for being optimistic: Best Value applies to local authorities as corporate agencies, it is backed by legislation and it encourages municipalities to manage their community in a more entrepreneurial way, by considering the needs of each individual "customer-resident". Contrary to the UK, the Netherlands did not accept at first to be a country of immigration. As a consequence, any policy devised to cope with minorities represented an ad-hoc reaction to crisis situations or community initiatives. But with the Counterennota policy, the municipality has taken a step towards a more proactive stance, by emphasising on mutual obligation for both nationals and non-nationals. Furthermore, with the establishment of the DiverCity programme, the council has entered into the first formal discussion on diversity management. This possibly indicates that the city is becoming even more proactive towards multicultural issues. Paradoxically, if national policies will manage to influence local ones - and this would require the municipality to reconsider its traditional integrationalist attitude to immigration - , Rotterdam could become even too proactive! Indeed, it is the belief of national government that integration has failed and, in line with the pragmatism which characterises Dutch politics, a call has been made to revert to an assimilationist approach. But a question raises in this sense: accepting that there is no perfect formula for the management of multiculturalism and far from wanting to find a perfect solution, is it not too early to even attempt to judge whether the Dutch integration policy has had any success at all?

Regrettably, the risk has not been overcome of diversity being strongly considered along the lines of disadvantage, crime and policing. In the UK, this has been happening for a long time and the statistical data pointing to a widespread fear of crime among residents seem to be fuelling this tendence. In Rotterdam, crime is policy number one. While officers do not feel it has a strong racial component on the local political agenda, it is worrisome that it definitely does at national level - this is most markedly exemplified in the shift of responsibility for the integration policy from the ministry of interior to the ministry of justice - and that it might be reactively translated in these terms at the urban level. Needless to say, the link crime-race makes for an explosive combination which has the potential of encouraging racial outbreaks, let alone the fact that it can divert attention from other minority issues of increasing relevance that might result being dealt with in a reactive manner.

7. Some concluding remarks

This comparative study aimed at investigating the overall approach of Leicester and Rotterdam in managing their multi-ethnic community. Clearly, the success of policies can only be evaluated over the long-term. It is therefore too early to say whether the integrationist approaches of Leicester and Rotterdam are or not a success. However, some lessons can be learnt for guiding future policy-making towards the proactive stance which is exemplified by the case of Leicester and Rotterdam.

While there is no ideal policy or practice, it has become evident that multicultural policy should be intended as a process, rather than an end in itself. There is and there will always be a clash between the short-termism attitude of politicians and the need for strategic planning. This can be hardly resolved. Yet, some measures can be elaborated to compromise diverging interests. In particular, the development of a clear vision involving all relevant actors has become paramount in Leicester to

sustain a corporate approach to diversity management. In addition, strong leadership will still represent the crucial ingredient for the advancement of multiculturalism in the city and political support from the very top will allow for policies to find a fertile ground towards progress. As it was largely discussed in the previous sections, the institutionalization of multiculturalism has allowed for it to advance in both cities. The most visible examples were given by referring to departmental and corporate practices. However, this is not to say that institutionalization is a cure-all solution in the management of diversity. What we need is a proactive municipal stance, notwithstanding the fact that the latter is most often derived from the long history of immigration of a country and from the recognition of the need to manage diversity, as the case studies showed. At the same time, diversity must be recognized beyond its racial and cultural significance, by taking into consideration gender, age, religious orientation, etc, as the DiverCity programme has attempted to do in Rotterdam. Local authorities should also be aware of the advancement of an hypothesis on the dualism crime-migration. In fact, this is shifting the attention of multicultural policies to potentially inexistent problems while it is also fuelling racist feelings. In addition, it is threatening the principle of social cohesion. In fact there is a risk for it to be translated in the form of policies deterring conflicts and supporting an unmediated harmony among people, instead of opening up confrontation. Ideally, municipalities can face upcoming tensions and allow them to be resolved through the development of bottom-up forms of governance where the power relation is redefined and where an open dialogue can take. This will lead to the empowerment of all individuals in a Marshallian society in which citizenship means rights as much as responsibilities. Unfortunately the road is not yet very much paved in this sense.

While this paper only briefly touched upon welfare and citizenship related issues, it should be stressed that municipalities will have to deal with the retreat of their welfare state and with the deriving vulnerability of their provision systems, which might leave minority groups hopelessly stranded. In this sense, it becomes increasingly crucial to call for the redefinition of the concept of citizenship, by substituting the prerequisite of nationality with one of refuge, to ensure that every resident has access to welfare rights. Against this background, the voluntary sector will assume an increasing role in this sense, particularly in the Netherlands, where the State already recognizes its responsibility.

Needless to say, further research is required to understand the costs and benefits of diversity and to monitor policy developments accurately. This would provide in fact a strong rationale for municipalities to invest in diversity and to search for new effective ways to manage it. Unfortunately, the link between diversity and organizational competitiveness is rarely made explicit (Cox, Blake, 1995). The biggest challenge will be therefore for municipalities to accept that "difference" is often thought of as "complete otherness" and that this creates fear. Next, they will be ready to adventure into the "unfinished knowledge" of diversity and to allow for conflicts to arise and creative forces to function within their communities. With this scope in mind, new professionals are required who are willing to learn multicultural literacy skills and to practice the art of intercultural communication, which has the capacity of building community ownership over multiculturalism. In Leicester and Rotterdam there are some positive signs of progress and this is surely the first step towards the cosmopolis Sandercock dreams of.

Endnotes

1. Powell was a conservative MP who was dismissed from its party, during the 1970s, because he called for the repatriation of immigrants (Institute of Race Relations, 2003).

2. The multicultural advisory group, one of the few examples across the UK, was found to supplement the council in the management of diversity and works on religion and race relations, although on an informal basis. Although informality might [1]be thought of as a limit, it is in fact an advantage since it allows to bring together a whole range of actors, including, first and foremost, the local community. The Leicestershire economic partnership, including, the city council and a number of private and voluntary organisations, has an equally crucial task, which is spread among 6 subgroups. One of the latter focuses specifically on diversity and looks at how equality can be formulated in policy-making.

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