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**Migration, ethnic economy and precarious citizenship among urban  
indigenous people**

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**Migration, ethnic economy and precarious citizenship among urban  
indigenous people**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

# **Migration, ethnic economy and precarious citizenship among urban indigenous people**

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This thesis contributes to our understanding of the impacts of political, social and economic dynamics of contemporary “free-market cities” on indigenous people that leave their traditional territories to settle on Latin American metropolises. The thesis examines the case of indigenous Shipibo migrants from the Amazon that have occupied in Lima, Peru a landfill site owned by the municipal government, and developed there a shantytown. The analyzes of the case sheds light on the innovative strategies that the Shipibo resort to in order to survive in the absence of formal jobs and social programs, and even despite recurrent threats to their social and cultural rights. Through the production of traditional handicraft, they collectively become ethnic entrepreneurs and enter the vast urban informal economy. Beside its interesting consequences for local politics and gender relations, this ethnic economic practice also becomes a way of group

making and community building. After prolonged waits –during which the state appeared intermittently and with ambiguous messages–, the Shipibo finally face they most dreaded fear: eviction. Upon confronting this situation, and lacking the clientelistic networks in which Andean migrant peasants could count on in past decades, the Shipibo utilize a innovative repertoire of contained contention to appeal to the leftist municipal authority and thus articulate functional alliances with the goal of gaining land tenure.

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## **1. Introduction**

By the mid-1980s, internal migration in Latin America was not a salient locus of academic inquiry anymore. After some decades of prolific research, migration scholarship in the Americas shifted its focus towards the prominent flows of international migrants that were entering the U.S and other developed countries (Castles and Miller 1993). Among the many reasons for this substantial change was the fact that Latin American cities were by then growing less rapidly than before and more endogenously than because of the advent of rural migrants (Cerruti and Bertonecello 2006; Fernandez-Maldonado 2013). Nevertheless, South American metropolises –urban centers that in previous decades had grown massively to become “cities of peasants” at first (Roberts 1978; Mangin 1970; Matos 1961) and then home of alleged “mass marginalities” (Quijano 1973; Nun 1969)– were still attracting migrants from the hinterlands. With the above-mentioned shift in migration studies, these current flows of rural-urban migration have been, to a notable extent, unexamined.

Among the new urban settlers in the region, a particular group of people that was not migrating consistently in previous decades stands out: indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples throughout the Americas are becoming increasingly urbanized (Peters and

Andersen 2013). However, despite notable exceptions in Canada (Todd 2001; Peters and Andersen 2013), Australia (Peters and Andersen 2013), Guatemala (O’Neill and Thomas 2011; Little 2004) and in transnational contexts (Kearney 1998; Velasco and Paris 2014; Batts 2014), little research has been carried out recently in other latitudes to understand how indigenous subjects are turning into urban dwellers, and particularly how is that they “make it” in the metropolises. These questions may seem irrelevant to some, given that these newcomers have considerably less of an impact for urban growth –Latin American cities were already, as the Peruvian anthropologist José Matos Mar said, “overflowing” with migrants of previous decades (1984, 1961). My concern for this population, however, is related not to the augmentation of urban population, but to what Matthew Desmond (2011, 2012) calls “the survival question”: “how do poor people survive in the absence of formal jobs and state assistance” (Auyero 2011: 432). For the particular case of indigenous people –considering they tend to be substantially more discriminated and segregated than other sectors of society–, I ask how do they cover their basic necessities in cities, especially after the “neoliberal revolution” (Wacquant 2008)?

In this thesis, I examine a case in particular –the one of the indigenous Shipibo people that migrated to the capital city of Lima (Peru) from traditional communities in the Amazonia. The Shipibo families settled in Lima decades after thousands of peasant migrants from the Andean region that established in the city radically changed urban politics (Collier 1976; Dietz 1977, 1998), socio-economic dynamics (De Soto 1986) and the built-environment (Turner 1977; Bromley 2003). Through the examination of the

case of the Shipibo, this thesis will revisit debates related to culture in the context of urban poverty (Small et al. 2010). In particular, we will discuss the determinants and consequences of the ways in which the Shipibo turn ethnic tokens such as handicrafts into petty commodities to enter the urban informal economy.

Also, we will see that, despite the Shipibo's partial insertion in the fluctuating informal economy, they suffer regimes of limited citizenship or what Brodwyn calls "a poverty of rights" (2008). As Lima grew to become a global city, urban politics have substantially changed making the clientelistic practices that migrants utilized in the past to gain property rights and other benefits from local politicians (Collier 1976; Dietz 1977, 1998) available just for well known and already established neighborhood associations (Dosh 2010). Facing different structural conditions than past settlers, the Shipibo anxiously wait and keep on waiting for the state to pay attention to their demands while hoping to get property rights over the land they occupy. As the beginning of the end approaches for the Shipibo, with a distressing and inauspicious outcome, they resort to frames and a discourse related to indigenous people's rights in order to gain visibility, fight back and cope with a context of urban relegation (2008). This is possible partially because of the ongoing recreation of the Shipibo identity in the city and the strong social networks they develop and reproduce as a community of artisans and ethnic entrepreneurs.

In addressing the issue of how are these new migrants adjusting to the city life and how is the city adjusting to them, this thesis attempts to further our understanding of the

impacts and consequences for the urban poor and for urban indigenous people in particular of the structural changes in the socio-economic configurations that gave way to the neoliberal moment and the establishment of the free-market city (Portes and Roberts 2005; Roberts and Portes 2006).

After a brief methodological note, chapter 3 provides detailed information about the Shipibo's coming to Lima, the social conditions of the settlement, and the political and economic context in which the advent took place. Chapter 4 then examines the incorporation of the Shipibo in the urban informal economy through the production and selling of handicraft –a female traditional practice that becomes in Lima their main source of income–, and its consequences for micropolitics and local affairs. Finally, chapter 5 discusses the relationships between Shipibo citizens and the national and municipal state. As we will see, the state's intermittence, ambivalence and (mis)presence (Rodgers 2006; Auyero et al. 2012) is responded by the Shipibo with innovating strategies of mobilization that grant them certain but not lasting success.

## 2. A note on method

The analysis presented here is based on a combination of the examination of newspaper accounts, public documents and research reports, and the “ethnographic reanalysis” (Burawoy 2003; Auyero and Mahler 2011) of interviews and field notes gathered by me and a colleague for another research project (Zavala and Bariola 2008).

That previous fieldwork experience consisted mainly on an ethnographic intervention in the community of Canta Gallo (Zavala and Bariola 2008; Bariola 2008). For over a six-month period in the fall of 2007, I spent four or five days a week in Canta Gallo. I held twenty-five semi-structured interviews with members of the community (thirteen with men, and twelve with women) and was participant observer in several public spaces, particularly in the meetings of the Shipibo association in which they collectively discussed the main threats faced in the city (Zavala and Bariola 2008: 158-167).<sup>1</sup> Since then I have occasionally gone back to the community to have informal conversations with the urban Shipibo.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to mention that I have the acknowledgement of Virginia Zavala to use part of the data gathered during the fieldwork undertaken in 2007.

Finally, it is important to mention that all the names of the participants in the interviews and observation have been changed for anonymity. The names and ranks in the associations of people that provided interviews in newspapers and other kinds of media have been maintained.

### 3. The Shipibo in a global city

On the banks of the Rimac River, in Lima, “you can hunt nothing but the flu, and you fish and grow only rubbish,” said my friend Juan once. He is one of the almost two thousand Shipibo migrants that inhabit the community of Canta Gallo, and one of the first I got to meet and get acquainted with (Zavala and Bariola 2008; Bariola 2008).



*Illustration 1: Shipibo man on the banks of the arid and contaminated Rimac River.*

*Source: Inga, Takayashi and Segura, Rio Nuevo, 2013*

The Shipibo are among the largest indigenous groups of the Peruvian Amazonia (Ministry of Culture-Peru 2014; Morin 1998). According the last official census (INEI 2010), the Shipibo population is of 22 517, although some researchers suggest that it actually reaches between 30 000 and 40 000 (Valenzuela 2002; Tournon and Cauper 1994). The Shipibo live mainly in the Amazonian region of Ucayali, in some 130 communities.

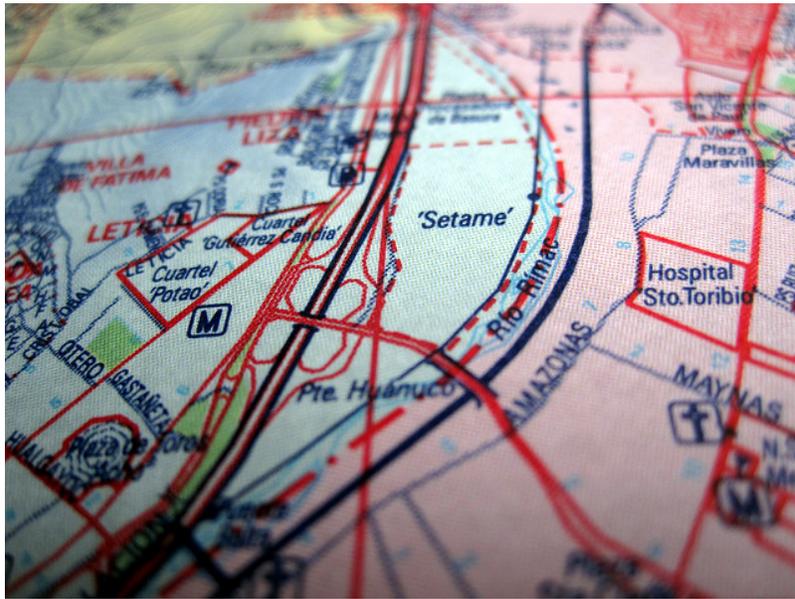


*Illustration 2: Amazonian region of Ucayali, Peru*

In Peru, until the last decades of the twentieth century, the state had very much relinquished the Amazon, and so indigenous peoples' lands were to a great extent beyond the grasp of bureaucratic governance. As Yashar notes, “the Amazon remained a largely uncharted and unincorporated space where indigenous peoples lived in relatively

autonomous circumstances” (2005: 2858). Very weak state capacity –and consequently low or inexistent provision of social services– and the lack of developed markets were, as expected, associated with high levels of poverty: indigenous people, as in other countries of the region, suffered by far worse socio-economic conditions than other sectors of society (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 1994). And they still do (Benavides et al. 2012). Beginning in the late 1960s, the government sponsored colonization programs of the Amazon following the wrong assumption that these territories were unoccupied (Yashar 2005). This brought little penetration of national bureaucracies, but rising number of Andean migrants and capitalist investors looking for oil and other extractive and productive activities.

Since then, and as other indigenous groups in the Americas, the Shipibo have been suffering the consequences of extractive industries and development projects in their traditional lands (Soldevilla 2010; Dove 2006). While other groups have opted for mobilization against the activities that are sorely affecting their territories (Bebbington 2004; Yashar 2005; Roberts 2008; Macias 2014), Juan and many other Shipibo preferred exodus. Pursuing aspirations of a better livelihood, they forsook the Amazon. Since 1990, an increasing number of people that self-identifies as part of this indigenous group inhabit some districts of Pucallpa, the biggest city of the Ucayali region (Ministerio de Cultura-Peru 2014). Many others, just as Juan, chose Lima instead. Today two hundred Shipibo families occupy a municipal landfill site in the capital city, just a few minutes from the Municipal Offices and the Governmental Palace.



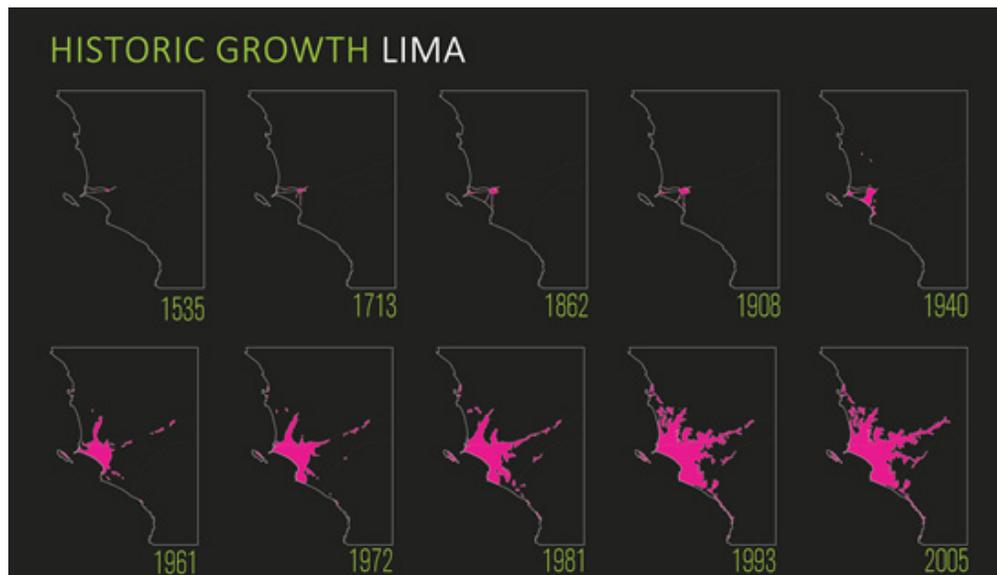
*Illustration 3: Map of the location of Canta Gallo. Setame and Enace, branches of the Department of Transportation, own the land where the Shipibo settled.*

*Source: Warren 2010.*

“‘So near and yet so far,’ huh” grumbles Juan with a pinch of irony. After almost a decade in Lima, the Shipibo know that the bureaucratic castle of the state is still distant and ambivalent. They only have occasional encounters with the arm of the state despite their ceaseless demands for attention and compliance; their most crucial concern nowadays is related to the land they occupy. “Back in the day...,” Juan says, “...you just stayed there, in the land you invaded, for a while and it was yours for good. We have been waiting for six, seven years, and what do get? Only rumors about future evictions... Things are different for us, I think.”

### 3.1. Lima, a free-market city

Indeed, Lima in the 2000s was not the same city that received thousands of migrants between in the 1940s and 1970s, when most of the Andean settlers moved in. Lima had 645 thousand inhabitants in 1940 and 1.9 million in 1960. In 2001, when the Shipibo diaspora began, the city had more than eight million people (Fernandez-Maldonado 2013). Many of the squatter settlements and slums that were created by the Andean “conquerors” (Degregori et al. 1988) in past decades, became by the 2000s developed districts with prominent flows of economic capital –i.e. Comas, Villa el Salvador, etc. (Dietz 1998; Fernandez-Maldonado 2013).



*Illustration 4: A glimpse to Lima's history of growth*

*Source: Estudio August Ortiz de Zevallos / Observatorio Urbano / Development Planning Unit 2013*

Since the early 1990s, during the rule of Alberto Fujimori, Peru followed the countries of the region putting in force a severe neoliberal shock program oriented to the consolidation of a free-market model (Portes and Roberts 2005; Weyland 2002; Gonzales de Olarte 1998). These policies of structural adjustment were implemented after the lost decade of the 1980s, when the national economy was in the midst of hyperinflation and in a state of generalized crisis (Gonzales de Olarte 1998; Robinson 2004; Bates et al. 2007). Certainly, through the privatization of state enterprises, the liberalization of capital markets and the radical reduction of public expenditure, the economic catastrophe was contained. But at the same time this process implied the retrenchment of state-supported social programs for poor people (Dietz 1998), the abandonment of housing policy (Fernández-Maldonado 2013), and most importantly for our case, “the precarization of employment and a decline in the proportion of formal workers to just one-third of the EAP [i.e. economically active population]” (Portes and Roberts 2005: 61). As Roberts (2005) has suggested, economic globalization has entailed ambiguous and contradictory effects for Latin American cities.

By the late 1990s, the Fujimori regime was confronting serious accusations of corruption, and his days in the Governmental Palace would soon come to an end (Conaghan 2006). Politics would change to a certain extent after he left office. What would not change or expire in time was the macroeconomic model: neoliberalism was here for good. Within this context of political turmoil, the Shipibo arrived to Lima.

### **3.2. Canta Gallo and *La Marcha por los Cuatro Suyos***

Julio owns a small bodega where he sells some groceries and handicraft that Ana –his wife– makes. Ana and Julio were among the first that came to Canta Gallo. On the top of its bodega is the main loudspeaker, through which important messages are transmitted to the community.

Julio likes to tell the story of the Shipibo that then settled in these parts of the capital. They came to Lima in 2000, he says, to participate in the *Marcha de los Cuatro Suyos* (Conaghan 2006), the biggest rally against Alberto Fujimori’s “corrupt regime.” Eliane Karp –Alejandro Toledo’s wife and a rather paternalistic friend to several indigenous leaders– and local NGOs covered the travel expenses for the Shipibo and other Amazonian indigenous peoples that joined the protest.

“Toledo was there, before he became President. He was the main agitator of the rally. But after the rally, Toledo and Eliane were gone... Gone... We were penniless. Some of us spent the night in a house near the historical center. Others did not have a place to sleep. But, you know, home didn’t feel like home anymore. Our communities were not the same. Hunting was harder and harder... So was fishing. We discussed the possibility of staying, and a few of us preferred to do so.”

Some months after, a dozen Shipibo families came to Lima to participate in a fair of indigenous people's handicraft in the Rimac district, in an area known as Canta Gallo. They found a place there that was available there, behind a tool market, right next to the riverside of the Rimac River. It was a landfill site owned by a branch of the National Department of Transportation and the Municipality of Lima. But property did not matter. From now on, it was theirs. Or so they thought.



*Illustration 5: Canta Gallo at dawn. Source: Specchia 2014*

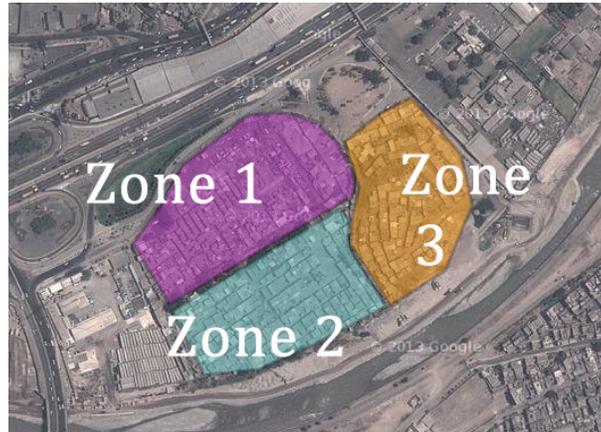
In time, some other Shipibo that were scattered in the city came to the new community. Soon after many others traveled from the rainforest to join their peers. From fifteen families in 2001, in 2006 there were 100. Progressively Canta Gallo grew as small Shipibo enclave. “Canta Gallo is an urban Shipibo town,” Juan asserts. “It is like a community, similar to those in the Amazon, only that this one is right in the middle of

the capital city.” Julio repeats once and again that the Rimac River reminds him of the Amazonian Rivers where he and other Shipibo used to live.

### **3.3. The “Andean folks”**

A few meters from the areas the Shipibo occupy, there are two other settlements of people that had migrated to Lima decades ago. The Shipibo refer to them as the “Andean folks.” Most of them work informally selling home improvement products and construction materials in the market that is right there, or in the flower market that is nearby. The “Andean folks” were relocated in Cantagallo in the 1990s after years of being street vendors outside the central market. The eviction took place after the center of Lima was declared a Unesco Heritage Site (Development Planning Unit-UCL 2013).

Between them and the Shipibo there are some occasional disputes related to access to water. In the areas occupied by the “Andean” folks –usually referred to as zone 1 and 2–, Sedapal (the company that provides water and sewerage services in Lima) installed public toilets, washing facilities, and a tank with potable water shortly after the relocation. When the Shipibo arrived in 2001, zone 3 –there area they occupied– had no access to any of those services.



*Illustration 6: Distribution of zones in Canta Gallo. The Shipibo are in zone 3.*

*Source: Development Planning Unit-UCL 2013.*

A few years after, the Shipibo managed to convince Sedapal to put a pipe network in their area as they committed to pay for all the expenses and materials needed for the construction. The pipe network was an extension of the one in zones 1 and 2, so the Shipibo were then obliged to pay a monthly fee to the “Andean folks,” whom in turn pay the service to Sedapal. Julio stated that the amount they had to pay varies, because ultimately it is a percentage of the general amount of the total bill that includes zones 1 and 2. But the Shipibo constantly feel they are being overcharged. In the meetings of the association, they uttered several complaints about their neighbors. An aspect that makes the grievances particularly harsh is that usually there is no water running to the pipe network in zone 3 during the mornings and the evenings. As it happens, the pumps of the pipe system do not have enough power for the water to climb the steep on which the Shipibo’s houses rest. But they get charged anyway.

### **3.4. The Shipibo Association(s)**

After some time in Canta Gallo, the urban Shipibo created a formal association, the *Asociación de Artesanos Shipibos Residentes en Lima* also known as “Ashirel.” Like some other migrant associations (Altamirano 1984; Doughty 1997), Ashirel’s objective was to keep the Shipibo organized so that they could discuss and attend the problems and adversities of urban life collectively (Zavala and Bariola 2008). Among the Shipibo, it is clear that most threats and problems need to be addressed jointly and with the cooperation of all or most of the members of the community. One day, after announcing a meeting through the loudspeaker on the top of his bodega, Julio said:

“The organization is important for me because we indigenous peoples are supported by these institutions. We turn to Ashirel with some problems in order to solve them in an organized fashion.”

As Virginia Zavala and I suggest elsewhere, “the sense of ethnic community has been re-signified in the city on the basis of the difficulties and challenges that are encountered by the Shipibo in a new urban context” (Zavala and Bariola 2008: 154; Anderson 1983). José, as a member of Ashirel’s leadership, claims that without the association, the Shipibo folks would be lost in Lima:

“If we do not imagine [the community], we would be lost. We live in the city of Lima now, and it is very different than homelands. The city can be very alienating to us. Surrounded by customs of a Western world, we have no choice but to imagine ourselves living all together. Living in a community allows that.”

Despite their organisational progress, the situation of the Shipibo in Lima is still very precarious. Many of them do not hold identification cards, so they are not able to access public services such as education, health and social programs. On the other hand, they occupy land that belongs to the city. The municipal government and national authorities appear and disappear consequently increasing and then decreasing the hope of the Shipibo to improve their social condition. This situation, as we will discuss in chapter 5, configures a context of “limited citizenship” (Holston 2008) that is confronted by the Shipibo with innovate forms of collective action.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the incorporation of the Shipibo to the urban economy. We will see that, like the peasants from the Andes in past decades, they were not able to find job in the formal labor market, so they engaged in informal economic activities. What was singular of the Shipibo though is that they used particular cultural tokens – traditional Shipibo handicraft– to become ethnic entrepreneurs and thus survive in the city. In short, they used use “culture” as a resource to incorporate themselves in the urban underground economy.

Before beginning that discussion, it is important to mention that after I finished my fieldwork Ashirel broke down into three different Shipibo associations. In some of my last visits I noted discrepancies between a group of mothers and the leadership of the Ashirel (Zavala and Bariola 2008). The mothers indicated that the President of the association was using their money for personal expenses and that he lied conveniently in some of the collective discussions to favor his family and friends. As the same time the number of Shipibo in Canta Gallo was growing substantially. The rumors of corruption were heard and embraced by the newcomers. Given that Jose, the then President of Ashirel, did not accept the charges and did not formally quit, the rest of the Shipibo preferred to create two new associations on the side. The relationship between Ashirel and the new organizations was tense and difficult until Lima's Mayor, Susana Villaran, gathered them all to create a working group in relation to the Via Parque Rimac Project, as we will discuss further on chapter 5.



*Illustration 7: Murals of notable street artists in Canta Gallo*

#### **4. The informal economy and handicraft making**

“Culture” and “identity” were relevant issues of debate in the established rural-urban migration literature. In Peru, for instance, Mangin (1957, 1967) and Doughty (1970), among others, examined migrant clubs and associations as spaces where rural outsiders could recreate traditional practices, and construct social networks with people of similar backgrounds to derive support to make to the urban lifestyle could be less harsh. This perspective drew some criticisms for its substantial disregard to structural factors and political facts, and because of its rather sturdy essentialism of migrants’ cultural identities (Sandoval 1997).

In other latitudes, scholars felt to a certain extent dissuaded from undertaking research vis-à-vis culture in the context of poverty after sociologists challenged Oscar Lewis’ controversial and fallacious “culture of poverty” model, and the Moynihan report (Small et al. 2010).

This thesis returns to the question of culture and poverty, but from a different perspective. Far from reporting on whether traditional culture is retained in the city or not, far from asking whether migrants have been fully assimilated to the *criollo* ways of life leaving behind their cultural heritage or not, and far from explaining poverty by poor

people's values thus "blaming the victims," as the "culture of poverty" model did according to Small, Harding and Lamont (2010); here we analyze how a group of migrants uses specific cultural repertoires of action to enter the informal economy and to cope with material hardship and deprivation in the city. Rather than opting for assimilation or for maintaining traditional "culture" –as a whole–, in this case a particular ethnic- and gender-marked practice, such as handicraft making, is reframed and utilized first as a survival strategy and then –at least for some– as a motive for ethnic entrepreneurship. We will see in the following pages how a group of Shipibo women in Lima re-scribes this repertoire of action to integrate themselves into the urban economy in times in which a high demand for exotic ethnic tokens is rising (Zizek 2004; Errington 1998; Vich 2007, 2012).

#### **4.1. To be or not to be a proletarian?**

Now that, as Juan suggested, fishing, hunting and agriculture –the main economic activities in traditional Shipibo communities in the Amazonia– were not feasible in the metropolis, finding a job in a saturated free-market city in which indigenous folks were regularly victim of prejudices (Galarza and Yamada 2014; Yamada et al. 2012) was not going to be easy. Many Shipibo tried; most of them failed.

Nelson had been a school teacher in Ucayali prior to coming to Lima. In his work, he gained some knowledge of bureaucratic procedures, so in the capital he became a sort of

broker for the Shipibo with the municipal authorities. Before being appointed as such by the communal leadership, when he barely had some weeks in Lima, Nelson tried to find a job. Unlike most, he was lucky: through a teacher colleague of his, he got a position as a night watchman at a small business in a district nearby. On his second day, late at night, he was falling asleep when a group of four men assaulted him. They beat him up and kicked him to the ground. The next day, as soon as he was able to, he went to talk to his boss. He gave his version of the unfortunate events, and tried to get some money to cover the expenses he had to make at the pharmacy to clean his wounds. “I was not asking for much, but all he got was a severe scolding.” Though the owner did not fire him, Nelson did not go to work that night. In fact he never went back. He tells me that he felt that in the reprimand the boss was subtly suggesting he was involved in the robbery. “I didn’t know what could happen afterwards, and I didn’t want to get in trouble. They always look for someone to blame, and they usually blame the outsiders.” Nelson claims he was discriminated against: he was blamed, in his view, because he was an Amazonian indigenous citizen.

Empirical research undertaken in other latitudes indicates that international migrants to the U.S. are often discriminated in the labor market, so that they prefer to seek self-employment considerably more than non-immigrants (Zhou 2004; Mata and Pendakur 1999). Past and current rural-urban settlers in Latin America –including the Shipibo, as we can see through Nelson’s narrative– followed similar patterns (Roberts 1991; Cross 1998; Roever 2006). But there is something singular to the Shipibo in comparison with

other internal migrants in the region. Most Andean peasants, unable to find jobs in the shrinking and never too big Peruvian industrial sector (Dietz and Tanaka 2002), turned to the informal economy as sellers of fruits, vegetables, grocery items, electronics, clothing or shoes (Roever 2006; Aliaga 2002). On the other hand, the Shipibo, lacking other opportunities, realized in time they had at hand something more valuable than they thought: traditional handicraft. The production of handicraft is a sociocultural Shipibo practice, carried out mostly by women. Given the extensive demand for it, this activity gained salience in the urban Shipibo economy. In short, unlike Andean peasants that were incorporated in the informal lumpen-proletariat, the Shipibo turned a traditional object into a petty commodity for which there was an increasing taste in the local and transnational scale. Before providing more detail about this form of incorporation, it is important to take into consideration the details of the informal economy.

#### **4.2. Informal economy in Lima**

What we call “informal economy”, as Zelizer suggests, “has historically been the arena within which the great bulk of production, consumption, distribution, and transfer of assets has always occurred” (2008: 190; Venkatesh 2007). More so than a defective and sketchy version of the formal economy that lacks rationality and order, informality encompasses a myriad of economic practices that allow people and firms to survive or even thrive beyond the grasp of state institutions and in contexts of adversity. Indeed, in developing countries, the informal economy generates incomes for a substantial number

of people that, according to Portes, “otherwise would be deprived of any means of subsistence” (2010: 159). In Latin American cities, about 50% of the total working population is employed or self-employed in the informal sector (Aliaga 2012; Perry et al. 2007; Tokman 2007).

As Roever suggests, Lima is often referred to as “the capital of informality” in the Latin America because “a vast number of its workers engage in informal economic activity” (2006: 23). In June 2006, the Peruvian National Institute for Statistics (INEI) indicated that 74.7% of EAP in Lima were working in small and micro enterprises, and that 33% were self-employed (Roever 2006).

The informal sector in Lima has been immense for a long time (Roever 2006; Aliaga 2012). This situation is related to the fact that during the era of import substitution industrialization (ISI) the country did not develop a vigorous industrial sector (Dietz and Tanaka 2002; Roever 2006).

### **4.3. Handicraft, gender and informal labor**

In Shipibo communities in the Amazon, handicraft making is one among many other productive activities (Zavala and Bariola 2008). Fishing, hunting and subsistence agriculture are other traditional economic practices of the group (Chirif et al. 1977), though, as I have mentioned above nowadays, these are less productive than they used to

because of the environmental effects of extractive industries (Soldevilla 2010). Without opportunities to find jobs in the formal market and lacking networks and contacts to enter into the established informal sector, the Shipibo turn to handicraft making as their main way to make a living. By using a traditional ethnic practice as a means of providing an income to their families, the Shipibo become ethnic entrepreneurs (Zhou 2004). As the tourist industry in Peru grows increasingly, they seize the current demand for exotic products (Vich 2012, 2007) to survive in the new urban context.

The Shipibo handicraft petty industry involves the making of necklaces, bracelets, embroideries, painted fabric mainly, skirts and ceramic vases. Wooden bows, arrows, spears and other items are also produced, but not as much given that they don't sell as well as the others.



*Illustration 8: Traditional Shipibo design pattern. Source: Shipibojoifiles n/d.*

The Shipibo fabrics, skirts, bracelets and ceramics follow a singular pattern of design known as *kené* (Belaunde 2012). *Kené* –see illustration 8– expresses and illustrates the Shipibo worldview or *cosmovisión*, and it is inspired on the shape and movements of anacondas (Morin 1998; Ministry of Culture-Peru 2013). In 2008 *kené* was declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Nation by the Peruvian government (Ministry of Culture-Peru 2013).

The sexual division of labor of the Shipibo marks handicraft production as a feminine activity, while fishing, hunting and agriculture are manly duties. Nelson –just as Julio and many other men in Canta Gallo– knows very well how to produce and sell handicrafts, but “the social norms that regulate gender in the community do not allow him to do so consistently” (Zavala and Bariola 2008: 156). This is not to say that all the women in the community participate equally on handicraft production. It is more so a particular group of women refer to as the “mothers.” Girls and adolescent women provide help in the process of embroidering fabric and skirts, and making the bracelets and necklaces, but the mothers are the responsible for the design and the ultimate product (Zavala and Bariola 2008). The mothers make handicrafts both alone at home and collectively as part of a subgroup of the associations. The materials they use are brought from the Amazon. Members of the families travel once or twice a year to their communities of origin to get them.

The mothers are also in charge of selling the products using different strategies. They engage in street vending, sell their product to formal galleries in touristic districts like Miraflores, or participate collectively in fairs and events. To sell handicrafts in the streets, the mothers wear traditional Shipibo outfits. Even if in Canta Gallo that day they are wearing jeans and t-shirts, they change to skirts and colorful blouses when they go out. They mainly wander around districts like Miraflores, Barranco and the historical center, where they know they can find tourists. During the summer, they also visit beaches in the south of Lima. Rosa tells me that she can make the equivalent of US \$25 on a good day. “But some days are really slow, specially when the *Serenazgos* [the municipal police] tells us to leave the sidewalks. Sometimes they even throw us off and confiscate our handicrafts. Those days we make nothing or just like 3 or 4 bucks.”

Fairs are usually much more convenient. They have formed a mother’s guild as part of the association, so they can go to the fairs and events using the name of Ashirel –or more recently those of the other associations; thus they won’t have to fear the presence of the authorities. Usually many mothers produce the bracelets, skirts, fabrics, etc. they sell, and some of them take turns to attend the clients. The profit is distributed accordingly.

Finally, some mothers have developed over time contacts with sellers in formal artisan’s galleries and stores in areas of the city that are visited by tourists on a regular basis. Their way of selling can be much more profitable than street selling of fairs. Vida –Nelson’s sister– has a contact in a gallery in Miraflores. She says that she will soon have enough

money to buy a couple boat motors and then go back to the Amazon to begin a small river transportation business. Not many as lucky enough to develop this sort of networks.



*Illustration 9: Shipibo mothers selling handicraft to tourist in a fair.*

*Source: Specchia 2014*

The labor condition of Shipibo men in Lima has been complicated. They make spears, bows and arrows, but these are not as easy to sell as the others. A few men got job offers as laborers, but because of experiences like the one Nelson had, some of them are hesitant. Most of the men, says Rosa, “are just there...helping women” with the handicraft (Zavala and Bariola 2008: 155). Nelson remarks that the situation –at least in 2006 and 2007 while I was doing fieldwork– was very different from the traditional

Shipibo sexual division of labor in the Amazon. While in traditional communities women's activities were not regarded as "work" according to the Shipibo ideology, "Here in Lima the situation is the opposite... Here the woman has her job," as Nelson says. Rosa asserts that the mothers in Canta Gallo could perfectly make it without the men in Lima:

We, the mothers... we are the ones that work here. I direct [the mother's guild], and I say to the mothers: "Let's make this kind of handicraft or let's make that other kind of thing..." And we do it together. Then we have a meeting and we say "Tomorrow we will do this other thing," and men don't matter anymore (laughter). We just work among ourselves (Bariola and Zavala 2008: 157).

#### **4.4. Mothers' agency and micropolitics**

Among many indigenous groups in Latin America labor or work is one the most salient sources of gender hierarchies (Marisol de la Cadena 1991; Bariola and Zavala 2008; Little 2004). In Amazonian communities, ethnographies of the Shipibo people report that men tend to be deemed as those that actually "work," while women's activities are not regarded as such (Chirif et al. 1977; Morin 1998). The testimonies of both men and women in Canta Gallo I gathered clearly state the same: taking care of children, doing laundry, cooking, collecting fruits and vegetables from the rainforest and making handicraft are not seen as "labor" in the Amazonian communities. Given that the ability

to do “labor” is one of the main factors that legitimizes the exercise of power (Zavala and Bariola 2008; De la Cadena 1991), women did not use to take an active as leaders in local associations and communal organizations: In the Amazon, Rosa says, “Women mostly dedicate themselves (...) to washing clothes, taking care of their kids and nothing else... Men *do* work.”

The situation in Canta Gallo, as Nelson suggests above, is radically different. The women that conform the group of the mothers are the ones that provide the main source of familial income and the communal economy. They even contribute daily with money for the associations. This, as Nelson continues, has important consequences for local politics:

This evening, there will be a meeting here... And you won't see men, but mostly women there. They are the ones who work now in the city. They are the ones who make contributions. That is why here women are the ones who make demands (Bariola and Zavala 2008: 157-158).

Nelson in this testimony states explicitly that the fact the women in Lima provide incomes to the families and to the associations, grants them agency to participate in the meetings and make decisions. As Virginia Zavala and I say elsewhere,

“Women are positioned as agents of social change in the community through the performance of a gendered and ethnic identity –making handicraft– that differentiates them from men (and from other women as well)” (2008: 158).

## **5. The Shipibo's insurgent citizenship**

Juan came to Lima as a performer of traditional Shipibo dances, and in Canta Gallo he became the leader of a small company of dancers. On my first visit to the community, I saw him rehearsing for a performance they had later on that day. “It is for these guys at the Ministry of International Commerce and Tourism, and PromPeru. They just called yesterday.” Juan indicates that he often receives demands like this of agencies of the municipal and national government. “They take forever to pay. But I take every call I receive, even if my friends that usually work with me can't make it. Sometimes the guys of PromPeru even call out of the blue for a performance that very day.”

Since the early 2000s, Peru –through its Ministry of Internal Commerce and Tourism– has been developing a national brand through which the country's can “present itself as an attractive commodity for the world market” (Vich 2007: 1). Colorful traditional practices and diverse agricultural items turn into marketing strategies to serve the demand of exoticism that grows progressively globally, as tourism becomes one powerful agent for development (Little 2004; Errington 1998). In this process, the technocrats of PromPeru –the specific agency of the above-referred Ministry in charge of the branding– resort regularly to the “exotic” Shipibo. Whenever they got to show and

sell diversity, the Shipibo come in handy given that there is no other enclave of indigenous Amazonian diversity in Lima.

Juan explains that his enthusiasm for the events and the calls he gets is not just related to income –“After all, it’s not much money.” More so, he says, he also takes these eventual convocations as opportunities for him and other urban Shipibo to meet and get acquainted with bureaucrats of the government. “I try for Jose, Nelson and others to come along sometimes, because this could be good for us, we could meet people that could help us with our concerns about the land.” But the hope is rather vain.

### **5.1. Waiting and waiting for the land to be ours**

More than social protection, pensions or any social program in general, the Shipibo’s concerns vis-à-vis public services and the state have to do with getting a good education for their children, and more importantly with the land they occupy. They are very serious about their new territory, as Juan Agustín –an urban Shipibo leader– made very clear in a recent statement: “We are not a fellowship of people that comes and goes anymore. We have taken roots and settled down” (Servindi 2013). During fieldwork, I recurrently heard an anecdote that glaringly expressed this point of view. Not long before I began my visits to Canta Gallo, vendors that worked nearby –they were “Andean folks,” according to some versions of the story– hired a group of thugs to expel the Shipibo from zone 3. As they approached, sticks and stones at hand, the Shipibo used bows, arrows, and spears

to counter the attack. Some Shipibo were badly injured, but in the end they managed to resist and repel the ambush without casualties.

During fieldwork, I witnessed in many occasions the staggering collective anxiety that rumors of eviction caused among the Shipibo. In these situations, the leadership of Ashirel used to call emergency meetings with all the urban Shipibo to address and discuss the basis for the hearsay. After heated and passionate discussions, the meetings ended up having positive and almost therapeutical effects for the participants (Zavala and Bariola 2008). With feelings of temporal tranquility and serenity, the Shipibo could keep on waiting for the state to grant their demands regarding land tenure, or –in its absence– for new rumors to diffuse.

## **5.2. The production of the city from below**

As Juan indicated, the Shipibo's hopeful wait was not based on mere dreams. They were aware that in the past and even not so long ago, settlers became conquerors after the state recognized rights for the lands they had invaded (Collier 1976; Dosh 2010; Degregori et al. 1988; Strauch et al. 2014). As Strauch, Takano and Hordjik note,

“No city in the developing world is as famous for its approach towards housing the urban poor as Lima, the capital of Peru. The city was considered an emblematic example for researchers and policy makers interested in self-help

forms of urban development because of its early acceptance of squatter settlements as a low cost housing policy – known in Peru as *barriadas*” (2014: 1).

Indeed, governments of Peru, since the mid-twentieth century, have allowed the invasion of public lands and endorsed the “self-help” house construction undertaken by the millions of migrants (Turner 1967). Parts of the city were thus “built from below”. This was a “cheap solution” for the prominent lack of housing in times in which the city was growing overwhelmingly (Collier 1976; Strauch et al. 2014; Fernández-Maldonado 2013; Turner 1967).

But even before the implementation of the famous “*Ley de Barriadas*,” –the legal mechanism through which the government regularized self-help housing development and squatter settlements– in 1961, the Peruvian state had been actively supporting the planning and construction of *barriadas*. In his famous book, Collier (1976) described the clientelistic networks that politicians established for electoral and other political purposes with migrants. As Collier (1976) explained, in exchange for votes or just to control mobilization, state officials provided land tenure and legalization processes for the squatters. Dosh and Lerager (2006: 39) suggest that in Peru the state rarely evicted invasions and squatter settlements that had certain degree of organization.

Juan summarizes the history of the capital in the second half of the twentieth century eloquently: “In Lima, people like us has to wait. You wait, and you get something.” As in

other contexts, this “something,” these rewards, make people feel that “waiting is not totally in vain” (Auyero 2014: 243). Because the Shipibo were cognizant of all this history, for them it made sense to wait. Sadly, in 2009 the disturbing rumors of eviction became more concrete. The waiting however did not end.

### **5.3. From Linea Amarilla to Via Parque Rimac Project**

In 2009, after many rumors and a few months before he left office, Luis Castañeda –then mayor of Lima– approved the *Linea Amarilla* Project, a US \$571 million megaproject that would seek to alleviate the egregious traffic in the area. The project involved the redevelopment of the invariably congested *Via Evitamiento* expressway, and the construction of a new, 9 km long highway –which for about 2 km would run underneath the Rimac River (Strauch et al 2014). The original plan for the construction proposed the displacement of 1350 families. The affected families would receive a compensation according to the status of the property title: those that were holders of legal title would receive about US \$200 per m<sup>2</sup>, while the ones that did not possess land tenure would a total of US \$5000.

In 2011, the new mayor, Susana Villaran renegotiated the project’s contract. The new version, named *Via Parque Rimac* (VPR), reduced the number of affected families to 950 and improved substantially the compensations: the families would receive a minimum of US \$30 000, and then the value of their dwelling on the market. The renegotiation also



#### **5.4. Limited citizenship**

Since 2011, the Shipibo had gained some public attention because of their recurrent presence in festivals, fairs and other sorts of events. NGO of diverse kinds visited regularly the community to offer services and help. International students from MIT (Warren 2010), University College-London (Development Planning-UCL 2013), NYU, etc., came to visit and do research.

Two years before, after a pacific indigenous protest in the Northern Amazonian region of Bagua was turned into a fatal confrontation with the police that caused the tragic loss of more than thirty lives, the discourse of indigenous peoples' rights had gained national notoriety (Fano Morrisey 2012). A fluctuant national indigenous movement was attained temporarily as the right of consultation for indigenous people gained prominence in national public debates. In 2011 a law that enacted that right was promulgated (Politai 2012). The Shipibo had been following this process closely. They even participate in the saliente rally to support the indigenous support.

As a renowned leftist, Susana Villaran –Mayor of Lima since 2010, after Castañeda– was particularly sensitive to the national indigenous agenda. Since 2012, though, Villaran was facing a process of impeachment endorsed by Castañeda and others. Villaran need to take actions that would allow her to retain the support of the people.

In that context, the Shipibo began appearing publicly speaking of their right to live in the city: “They always say the Shipibo don’t have the right to live here in Lima. That is discrimination against us.” (Suarez 2013). They began questioning those who thought indigenous people did not belong in urban sites:

“There are no words to answer to those who ask ‘Why are not you in the jungle?’  
The law and the rights are for all the Peruvian population. Anyone is free of migrating and settlin in other places” (Suarez 2013).

The Shipibo also did their best to consolidate alliances with engaged scholars, local organizations and law practitioners. Through social media, interviews for newspapers and TV, they diffused their messages consolidating a strategy to appeal to Villaran’s leftist leaning. An the entrance to the community a graffiti sends the clear message “Canta Gallo está con el NO” (Canta Gallo is against), referring to their stance in relation to the process of Villaran’s impeachment.



*Illustration 11: Canta Gallo is against the impeachment of Villaran.*

*Source: Development Planning Unit-UCL 2013.*

For the Shipibo, Luis Castañeda, the previous mayor, became an enemy: “We fight against Castañeda because he used to throw loads of garbage on us, disregarding the health of our children” (La República 2012). In their eyes, Castañeda, much like the Brazilian bureaucrats that Holston analyzes, was partisan of a “system of stratagem and bureaucratic complication deployed by both state and subject to obfuscate problems, neutralize opponents, and, above all, legalize the illegal” (2008: 19).



*Illustration 12: Mural in the walls of a house in Canta Gallo. The stance against Linea Amarilla is clear. Source: Specchia 2014.*

If indigenous people in the Amazon usually suffered the abandonment of the state, for the urban Shipibo, Castañeda was taking a step further in reproducing a form of differentiated citizenship, “universally inclusive in membership and massively inegalitarian in distribution” (Holston 2008: 197). They felt their right to the land and to exercise their cultura in an urban scenario were being denied, as it had happened once and again in the past both in the city and in Ucayali. This lack of legal privileges configured “a poverty rights” (Fischer 2008). However in the case of the Shipibo this was not just tied to social destitution (Fischer 2008), but also to indigeneity.

### **5.5. Insurgent citizenship**

Holston (2008) suggests that, in some cases –as the one of the working poor he studies in Brazil–, struggles for land rights and public services open windows for the destitute to gain awareness over their differential citizenship and its particular determinants after a long and sometimes frustrating periods of time. He calls this process “insurgent citizenship.”

The response of the Shipibo to the threats of eviction clearly shows that they feel they have earned rights over the land they occupy. They have been there for more than a decade, living collectively, paying their bills and producing handicraft. As some of them say, they have the right to live the city, and to practice culture and identity there. This provides a clear example of “insurgent citizenship”.



*Illustration 13: Susana Villaran and the Shipibo leaders in one of the meetings of the working group for VPR. Source: Municipality of Lima 2013.*

In what can be called a partial success, the Villaran administration of Lima has promised an ambitious relocation project of the Shipibo on the other margin of the Rimac River. They have even created a working group in which relevant decisions in relation to the relocation will be discussed. The working group was developed to reach agreements with the Shipibo about different aspects of the relocation such as the regime of property that will be used, the architectural style and details of the new location, among others. Villaran said on the first meeting that

“The goal of the working group is that the relocation process takes place in the best way possible, in a context of dialog and good faith (...). The previous version

of the project [*Linea Amarilla*] did not take into consideration the people. We have changed to generate better conditions for the community” (Municipality of Lima 2013).

Even though the Shipibo leaders that attend the meetings represent three different associations, they usually work together and make decisions collectively.

I say this is a “partial success,” because the relocation has not still taken place whereas the construction of the highway is already underway. Day after day it advances towards the limits of the community. On the other hand, Villaran is near the end of her mandate, and chances for re-election are not promising according to the last polls.

It seems that, at least for now, the Shipibo will have to continue waiting.

## 6. Conclusions

How do urban indigenous people survive in a context of destitution and relegation? In his famous book *Off the books*, Venkatesh notes that

“This vital economy cannot be reduced to the simple exchange of money and goods, because it is also a cultural activity. Through the underground economy, people build personal and collective identities, and they create moral boundaries regarding acceptable and reprehensible behavior” (2008: 218).

Certainly, through their incorporation and participation in the informal economy of handicraft production, the urban Shipibo continuously recreate ethnic identity in the urban scenario not just as a commodity, but also as a group-making strategy that allows them to confront the adversities of the urban context as a collective. The Shipibo do not take part of a marginal, “absolute surplus population,” as Wacquant (2008) would say of the unemployed workforce in neoliberal times (Caldeira 2009). As it was made clear in chapter 4, they participate in local and transnational circuits of exchange, so that their economic production is functional to the expansion of “cultural capitalism” (Zizek 2004).

On the other hand, we have discussed the organizational strategies that the Shipibo resort to, when finally –after a long wait– they confront eviction. Unlike the informal laborers in India (Agarwala 2013), Shipibo organize along ethnic and not class lines. Does this help us understand why much of the labor and development literature suggest that informal workers do not organize? (Agarwala 2013). The answer to this question is object of further research.

Very much like the groups of successful Innovators examined by Paul Dosh (2010) in Lima and Quito, the Shipibo adopted nonviolent techniques of collective action –what McAdam et al. (2006) would call non-transgressive contention–, discursive frames of universal and indigenous peoples’ rights, and the extensive use of traditional and social media. With these innovative repertoires, they challenged regimes of limited citizenship, to the point that they attained partial success in the face of the Via Parque Rimac Project. We know though that this is not the end of the story, and the Shipibo may still have to wait some more.

Now, finally, about waiting, it is interesting to note that, for the Shipibo, the prolonged waits did not generate among them a collective feeling of powerlessness and submission, as it did for the Argentine denizens analyzed by Javier Auyero (2014, 2012). In this regard, the experiences of the Shipibo show that not in every case “waiting (re)creates subordination” to the authority of the state (2012: 19). In the case of the Shipibo, it may

be very well that their group-making strategies serve them to navigate on the margins of the nexus of time and power.

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