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Developing embedded devices using opensource tools: application to handheld game consoles

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Association Projet Aurore, Besançon, France

manuscript, slides and associated documents at
 http://jmfriedt.free.fr

August 14, 2009

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Introduction

- Hardware is hardly understandable in modern computers: serial (SATA, I²C) or fast (PCI) protocols difficult to understand
- Parallel protocols easiest to use are no longer available (ISA, processor bus 6502 or Z80, parallel port)
- Older, well documented hardware is still accessible on handheld gameconsoles.
- availability of an opensource emulator desmume

 \Rightarrow use the handheld game console Nintendo Dual Screen (NDS) for getting familiar with hardware/software interaction and instrument developement

This is **not** "yet another platform on which to run GNU/Linux". The principles described here are valid for any platform: the NDS is widely available and "low" cost, well documented.

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Available hardware

- Two processors: ARM9 CPU and ARM7 coprocessor (bus sharing)
 ARM crosscompiler (gcc, newlib and binutils, appropriately patched depending on the target)
- 4 MB RAM (DS and DSLite: avoid DSi)
- wifi interface, but no asynchronous serial port (RS232)
- a legacy bus for Gameboy Advance compatibility: slot2
- a synchronous serial bus for reading game software: slot1 cartridge.

Requirement: get a cartridge for executing our own programs (games) on the NDS (M3DS Real).

Objective: display and transfer over the wifi network some "real world" data (sensor node, robotics ...)

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Let's start with a familiar environment

 Ready to use DSLinux image: Linux port to ARM9 processor thanks to the availability of gcc ¹ (+newlib & binutils + patches)

 Familiar environment: posix, most hardware accessed through hardware modules /dev, no need to understand the underlying architecture, keyboard for typing commands on the bottom touchscreen

 Pre-compiled toolchain and linux image at http://kineox.free.fr/DS/

⇒ shell and "simple" interfaces such as framebuffer (/dev/fb0) are readily available thanks to the work of the DSLinux team



¹toolchain compiled for x86 platform: http://stsp.spline.de/dslinux/toolchain

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Let's start with a familiar environment

- Understand the frambuffer data organisation (16 bit depth=5R5G5B)
- common interface with classical framebuffer: port from one architecture to another is mostly transparent as long as an hardware abstraction layer exists
- /dev/ and /proc are supported

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Slot2 cartridge bus

- All processors are based on the same architecture: a data bus holds the information (what), the adress bus the location where the data are fetched/stored (where), the control signals indicate which operation to perform (read, write, interrupt, dma ...)
- The older gameboy advance including ARM7 bus was well documented



Let's try to use it to interface to the world ...

Two steps:

- write informations to communicate with the world (no risk of damaging the hardware since output only)
- 2 read informations to gather informations on the environment (more challenging since the hardware must comply with the other peripherals of the CPU: but timing, high impedance bus)

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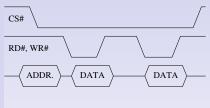
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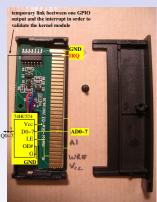
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Hardware interfacing



Parallel bus \Rightarrow

- address defines where the action takes place,
- data bus defines what is transfered,
- control bus defines how the transfer occurs



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Blinking LED

- No need for fancy hardware: use a Rumble Pack cartridge
- Program example for accessing a hardware address (memory mapped I/O in Freescale architecture):



```
#include < stdio.h>
#include < stdlib . h>
#include <unistd.h>
#include <sys/types.h>
#include <sys/stat.h>
#include <fcntl.h>
#include <sys/ioctl.h>
int main(int argc, char **argv)
{ printf(" demo rumble : 1/3=%f\n",1./3.);
 if (argc >1) {
   *(unsigned short*)(0x8000000)=(unsigned short)atoi(argv[1]);
   sleep(1);
                                      // active le moteur sur argv→
          \hookrightarrow [1]=2
   *(unsigned short*)(0x8000000)=0;
 return(0);
```

- 1 define which address is associated with which hardware (address decoder)
- 2 define the data size (*(unsigned short*))
- 3 define which value to put on the data bus
- 4 the control signal are automagically generated by the processor

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#include <stdlib.h>
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#include <fcntl.h>
#include <sys/ioctl.h>
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                                     // active le moteur sur argv→
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- define which address is associated with which hardware (address decoder)
- 2 define the data size (*(unsigned short*))
- 3 define which value to put on the data bus
- 4 the control signal are automagically generated by the processor

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Data acquisition

- The only additional trick is to keep the data bus lines high impedance when you are not supposed to talk
- Use of an analog to digital converter in parallel (bus sharing thanks) to RD#/WR# and CS#) to the latch
- This example: fast analog to digital conversion (ADC), theoretically 1 MS/s, practically half that speed
- ADC is more fancy than a latch: start conversion, wait, read conversion result (fixed delay or interrupt = kernel module)





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ADC control example

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include < stdlib . h>
#include <unistd.h>
#include <sys/types.h>
#include <sys/stat.h>
#include <fcntl.h>
#include <sys/ioctl.h>
#define TAILLE 255
int main(int argc, char **argv)
{int f, taille=TAILLE;
 volatile int k;
 char *c:
 c=(char*)malloc(TAILLE); // demonstrates the use of malloc without MMU
 for (f=0:f<TAILLE:f++)
   \{*(unsigned short*)(0x8000000)=(unsigned short)0:
    for (k=0; k<10; k++) {} // DO NOT compile with -O2
    // usleep(7):
                           // call to usleep is too long !
    c[f]=*(unsigned short*)(0x8000000)&0xff:
 for (f=0:f<TAILLE:f++) printf("%x ".c[f]):printf("\n"):</pre>
 return (0):
```

- kernel space with fixed delay
- hardware interrupt generated by end-of-conversion (slow !)



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Problem with uClinux

Conclusion of DSLinux: **memory footprint too large** for a 4 MB system \Rightarrow follow the trend and add RAM, or **find a better use of the available resources**.

- most programs in busybox will run out of memory, even less!
 only a few hundred kB remain after loading the kernel
- no luck in using portable graphic interfaces (SDL, Qtopia)
- one option is to use the memory expansion pack ... on slot 2, i.e. no access to the ARM9 bus left

Yet another solution: use another development environment, POSIX compatible yet with a small footprint.

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RTEMS on NDS

- RTEMS is an executive environment for embedded devices, i.e. a framework for developing a monolithic application based on multiple modules.
- From the developper point of view, similar to an operating system, but no memory management, no scheduler, no dynamic loading of application ...
- Yet availability of OS functionalities such as TCP/IP stack, file format, threads ... even a shell & user input interface (Graffiti)!
- Dedicated functionalities for embedded system debugging: CPU use, stack use
- Real time + strong support (used by large national & international agencies)
- compiled with gcc (+ patches) ⇒ familiar environment

An NDS BSP has been developed by M. Bucchianeri, B. Ratier, R. Voltz & C. Gestes ²

²http:

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Basic program

- RTEMS provides stdxx and POSIX compatibility
- runs on desmume for all non-hardware related developments
- provides an hardware abstraction layer

but not a fully dynamic operating system so the resources needed by the application must be defined in the program







Hello World

framebuffer display

wireless data transfer

```
#include <bsp.h>
  Developing
               #include < stdlib.h>
   embedded
               #include < stdio.h>
 devices using
               #include < nds/memory.h>
opensource tools:
 application to
 handheld game
               rtems_id timer_id;
   consoles
               uint16_t l=0;
  Friedt & al
               void callback()
               { printk("Callback %x\n",1);
                 (*(volatile uint16_t*)0x08000000)=1;
                 l=0 \times ffff - 1:
                 rtems_timer_fire_after(timer_id , 100, callback , NULL);
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               rtems_task Init(rtems_task_argument ignored)
               { rtems_status_code status;
RTEMS
                 rtems_name timer_name = rtems_build_name('C', 'P', 'U', 'T');
Draw, compute.
                 printk( "\n\n*** HELLO WORLD TEST ***\n" );
                 (*(vuint16*)0x04000204) = ((*(vuint16*)0x04000204) \& "ARM7_OWNS_ROM); // bus access to ARM9
                 status = rtems_timer_create(timer_name,&timer_id);
                 rtems_timer_fire_after(timer_id . 1. callback . NULL):
                 rtems_stack_checker_report_usage(); // requires #define CONFIGURE_INIT
                 printk( "*** END OF HELLO WORLD TEST ***\n" ):
                 while (1) :
                 exit( 0 ):
               /* configuration information */
               #define CONFIGURE_APPLICATION_NEEDS_CONSOLE_DRIVER
               #define CONFIGURE_APPLICATION_NEEDS_CLOCK_DRIVER
               #define CONFIGURE_RTEMS_INIT_TASKS_TABLE
               /* configuration information */
               #define CONFIGURE_MAXIMUM_DEVICES
                                                                        40
               #define CONFIGURE_MAXIMUM_TASKS
                                                                        100
               #define CONFIGURE_MAXIMUM_TIMERS
                                                                        32
               #define CONFIGURE_MAXIMUM_SEMAPHORES
                                                                        100
               #define CONFIGURE_MAXIMUM_MESSAGE_QUEUES
               #define CONFIGURE_MAXIMUM_PARTITIONS
                                                                        100
               #define CONFIGURE_MAXIMUM_REGIONS
                                                                        100
```

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Framebuffer access & math lib.

Framebuffer access similar to DSLinux: minor changes to adapt to the new device naming convention (exemple provided by M. Bucchianeri)

```
inline void draw_pixel(int x, int y, int color)
               { uint16 t* loc = fb info.smem start:
                 loc += v * fb info.xres + x:
                 *loc = color: *loc |= 1 << 15: // 5R, 5G, 5B
               struct fb_exec_function exec;
               int fd = open("/dev/fb0", O_RDWR);
Draw, compute, exec.func_no = FB_FUNC_ENTER_GRAPHICS;
               ioctl(fd, FB_EXEC_FUNCTION, (void*)&exec);
               ioctl(fd, FB_SCREENINFO, (void*)&fb_info);
               #define CONFIGURE_HAS_OWN_DEVICE_DRIVER_TABLE
               rtems_driver_address_table Device_drivers[] =
               { CONSOLE_DRIVER_TABLE_ENTRY,
                 CLOCK_DRIVER_TABLE_ENTRY,
                 FB_DRIVER_TABLE_ENTRY,
                { NULL, NULL, NULL, NULL, NULL, NULL }
```



Drawing of a fractal displaying the resolution of a 3rd order polynom:

- 1 the NDS can be used for useful calculations including solving equations: floating point calculation emulation
- access to framebuffer
- 3 adding a new command to the RTEMS shell

```
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   embedded
  devices using
opensource tools:
 application to
handheld game
    consoles
```

Hardware access (GPIO & ADC)

Bus control must be granted to the ARM9 CPU

```
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          #include <nds/memory.h>
          [...]
          void callback()
          { printk("Callback %x\n",1);
Analog input
            (*(volatile uint16_t*)0x08000000)=1;
           1=0xffff-1;
Draw, compute.
           rtems timer fire after(timer id. 100, callback, NULL):
uClinux &
          rtems_task Init(rtems_task_argument ignored)
          {rtems_status_code status;
          rtems_name timer_name = rtems_build_name('C','P','U','T');
          // cf rtems-4.9.1/c/src/lib/libbsp/arm/nds/libnds/source/arm9/rumble.c
          // sysSetCartOwner(BUS_OWNER_ARM9);
          // defini dans rtems-4.9.1/c/src/lib/libbsp/arm/nds/libnds/include/nds/memo
            (*(vuint16*)0x04000204) = ((*(vuint16*)0x04000204) & ~ARM7_OWNS_ROM);
            status = rtems_timer_create(timer_name,&timer_id);
           rtems timer fire after(timer id. 1. callback, NULL):
          [...]
                                                        ◆□ → ◆□ → ◆ □ → □ □
                                                                                   17/33
```

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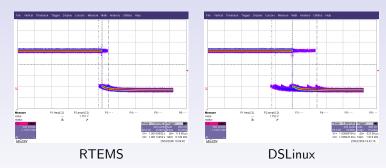
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Real time?

- Real time is defined as a system with maximum latency between a signal and the processing of the information.
 - The shorter the better, but an upper boundary must never be reached



Three threads, two for blinking diodes and one running the Newton fractal drawing for $\simeq 10$ seconds upon user request.

→ DSLinux diplays latency shift during contect changes.

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TCP/IP over wifi networking

- correction of a bug in the data structure handling TCP/IP packets
- convenient connection to the shell (as opposed to the Graffiti interface)
- use of the wireless interface for data transfer (the telnetd server can handle other applications than a shell)



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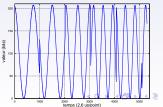
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TCP/IP over wifi networking

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- convenient connection to the shell (as opposed to the Graffiti interface)
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TCP/IP over wifi networking

rtemsShell.

3. telnetd: (server)

rtems_telnetd_initialize(

```
NULL.
                                                            false.
static struct rtems_bsdnet_ifconfig netdriver_config = {
                                                            RTEMS_MINIMUM_STACK_SIZE*20, /* shell needs a large stack */
    RTEMS_BSP_NETWORK_DRIVER_NAME,
    RTEMS_BSP_NETWORK_DRIVER_ATTACH,
                    /* No more interfaces */
                                                          ):
    "10.0.1.20",
                  /* TP address */
   "255.255.255.0", /* IP net mask */
   NULL.
                   /* Driver supplies hw addr */
```

2. route:

1. ifconfig:

```
/* Network configuration */
struct rtems_bsdnet_config rtems_bsdnet_config = {
   &netdriver_config,
   NULT.
                  /* do not use bootp */
                 /* Default network task priority */
   Ο,
                 /* Default mbuf capacity */
   Ο,
                  /* Default mbuf cluster capacity */
                   /* Host name */
   "trabucavre.com"./* Domain name */
   "10.0.1.1".
                 /* Gateway */
   "10.0.1.13", /* Log host */
  {"10.0.1.13" }. /* Name server(s) */
  {"10.0.1.13" }. /* NTP server(s) */
```

```
/* priority */
false
                /* telnetd does NOT ask for password */
```

/* "shell" function */

/* listen on sockets */

/* no context necessary for echoShell */

4. application:

```
void rtemsShell(char *pty_name, void *cmd_arg) {
       printk("====== Starting Shell ======\n");
       rtems_shell_main_loop( NULL );
       printk("===== Exiting Shell ======\n");
```

OR (another server than the shell)

```
void telnetADC( char *pty_name, void *cmd_arg) {
  char *c; int f;
  c=(char*)malloc(TAILLE);
  while (1) {
    for (f=0;f<TAILLE;f++) {
      *(unsigned short*)(0x8000000)=(unsigned short)0;
      c[f]=*(unsigned short*)(0x8000000)&0xff;
  for (f=0;f<TAILLE;f++) printf("%x ",c[f]);
  printf("\n");
```

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TCP/IP over wifi networking



Configuration of AP MAC address (commercial game)



Direct connection from NDS to eeePC configured as AP 3

⇒ fully functional TCP/IP stack for connection to the NDS running RTEMS through a wifi link

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uClinux on PSP

- So far we have used readily available toolchains (DSLinux, RTEMS) targetted towards ARM architectures.
 - The toolset gcc, binutils & newlib will run on most architectures, including MIPS.
- The PSP is based on a MIPS4 architecture, provides 32 MB RAM
- Let's try to build a cross compilation environment for uClinux towards the PSP

Less hardware oriented and more towards software: the newer PSP has hardly any communication peripherals (RS232 as IR and headset port, USB & wifi not supported)

⇒ external microcontroler for hardware interface and communicate through RS232



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Requirements

- Flash a new firmware to replace the original Sony firmware which does not allow executing programs from the MemoryStick.
- Install the crosscompilation toolchain (PSP SDK 4 and the toolset called the PSP SDK 5 to generate homebrew games: the bootloader copying the uClinux kernel + rootfs to RAM is a game
- The games have access to the Sony OS functions for accessing hardware peripherals. Most functions are not reverse engineered (IPL SDK) and hence hardware peripherals are not accessible from uClinux

⁴http://ps2dev.org/psp/Tools/Toolchain/psptoolchain-20070626.tar.bz2

⁵http://ps2dev.org/psp/Projects/PSPSDK ←□ → ←□ → ← 臺 → ← 臺 →

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The bootloader

Uncompress the kernel + rootfs image, copy to memory and jump to the starting address after initializing the hardware: last chance to use the Sony OS functions (e.g. pspDebugScreenPrintf())

```
#define KERNEL ENTRY
                            0x88000000
#define KERNEL PARAM OFFSET 0x00000008
#define KERNEL MAX SIZE
                            (size t)(4 * 1024 * 1024) /* 4M */
#define printf
                            pspDebugScreenPrintf
BOOL loadKernel(void ** buf . int * size )
  gzFile zf:
  void * buf:
  int size:
  zf = gzopen( s_paramKernel, "r" );
  buf = (void *)malloc( KERNEL MAX SIZE ):
  size = gzread( zf. buf. KERNEL MAX SIZE ):
  gzclose( zf ):
  *buf_ = buf;
  *size_ = size;
void transferControl(void * buf_, int size_)
    KernelEntryFunc kernelEntry = (KernelEntryFunc)( KERNEL_ENTRY );
    memCopy( (void *)( KERNEL_ENTRY ), buf_, size_ ); /* prepare kernel image */
    uart3_setbaud( s_paramBaud );
    uart3_puts( "Booting Linux kernel...\n" );
    kernelEntry( 0, 0, kernelParam );
```

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uClinux for MIPS: toolchain

- The MIPS cross-compilation toolchain is known to work well: architecture used on routers
- MMU-less CPU on PSP \Rightarrow generate BFLT outputs instead of the usual ELF.
- requires a dedicated linker: elf2flt includes
 - the shell script ld-elf2flt
 - the program elf2flt able to convert ELF binaries to th Binary Flat (BFLT) format
 - the program flthdr for editing the header of BFLT files.
 - ld-eld2flt replaces the usual ld linker when the -elf2flt compiler option is used

If the ld script is called with the -elf2flt option, then ld.real (original linker) followed by ld-elf2flt are successively called.

```
# mipsel-psp-gcc -W1,-elf2flt -o test test.c
# ls
test.gdb test
```

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uClinux for MIPS: buildroot.

- Linux kernel + associated tools for generating a roots = complex environment
- One of the most commonly used BSP which manages patches & Makefiles for generating a coherent environment for compiling the toolchain, kernel and userspace tools: buidroot
- buildroot = a structured set of Makefiles and patches for most CPU architectures + scripts for downloading the right archives to build a functional uCinux image

Result of the compilation: the cpio image including kernel + rootfs (including busybox) as initramfs at

buildroot-psp/project_build_mipsel/linuxonpsp/linux-2.6.22/arch/mips/boot/ vmlinux.bin.

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Running uClinux and communication

uClinux runs on the PSP, the OnScreen Keyboard has been ported (SMS like)





- The PSP provides enough memory to run graphic interfaces such as SDL, so porting many GNU/Linux tools to the MIPS based PSP is possible
- what about hadware interfacing?

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Using the serial port to communicate with the PSP

- First approach: use a terminal software since the serial port has been linked to the keyboard layer
 - the serial port is periodically polled (CPUTIMER interrupt 66), cf linux/drivers/serial/serial_psp.c

- this interrupt service routine wakes up a kernel thread in charge of testing whether a character is available in the queue of the UART
- use the serial port and a dedicated microcontroller to add hardware functionalities

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Converting a PS2 keyboard stream to RS232



- Use of one of the examples provided with msp-gcc (the gcc cross-compiler targetting the MSP430) in examples/mspgcc/pc_keyboard.
- instead of displaying the keystroke on an LCD, transfer via RS232
- notice that the key number is transferred on PS2 when the key is hit and released
- no need for a PC, autonomous PSP with keyboard !

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Conclusion

- A game console provides the resources typically found in high grade embedded systems (e.g. routers, digital cameras) and hence a playground to get familiar the techniques associated with scarce resource
- NDS hardware bus still understandable and usable for hardware interfacing
- gcc is our friend, with a ports to MIPS and ARM-architectures
- DSLinux requires too much memory to perform any useful function
- switch to a low memory footprint executive environment: RTEMS
- patched RTEMS for NDS to add full wifi communication functionality

 initial goal reached, i.e. wireless transmission of physical quantities obtained on an A/D converter
- ullet coherent environment to compile uClinux + tools on MIPS based PSP
- little hardware extension capabilities on PSP, so add external microcontroler communicating through RS232 link
- use and expand some of the available demonstration applications to suite most of our needs (framebuffer, text mode interface, character input ...)

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Acknowledgement

- Pierre Kestener (CEA/IRFU, Saclay, France) mentioned the NDS BSP of RTEMS
- M. Bucchianeri answered our questions concerning the use of the RTEMS BSP
- Santa Claus brought the PSP and NDS handheld game consoles

Further readings:

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