New Lines of Division in the New Berlin[1]

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German perceptions of New York City zero in on the disparities furrowing this "most European" U.S. metropolis. Popular impressions appear horrified at the juxtaposition and intensity of glamour and squalor, while scholarly views contrast the social polarization so characteristic of U.S. cities – paradigmatically represented by New York – with "the European City," which, by definition, is more integrated, homogeneous, and inclusive (cf. Häußermann and Siebel 1993). Such German views have a vast literature to go on: the social polarization and dividedness of New York City is documented and analyzed like no other. And, as a consequence, it has been labeled the exemplary "dual city" (Mollenkopf and Castells 1991), "divided city" (Fainstein et al. 1992) "quartered city" (Marcuse 1989), and "revanchist city" (Smith 1996).

Berlin, in contrast, has been depicted as the archetypal European city, characterized by homogeneous fabric and socially mixed neighborhoods. This essay looks at Berlin since unification and finds that, twelve years after the fall of the Wall the city indeed is no longer divided by a "death strip," but new, more and less visible boundary lines have come to traverse the city, establishing socio-spatial patterns of polarization not known before. Clearly, it can no longer serve as a counter model to the polarized U.S. metropolis. What is more: the policy responses with which local politicians have sought to address these disturbing trends, and with which they are expressly attempting to prevent an "Americanization" of the German city, seem to exacerbate new forms of socio-spatial polarization heretofore more characteristic of U.S. cities.

What is striking on first sight is the transformation, since unification, from a relatively compact, socially integrated city to a fragmented, sprawling cityscape with more pronounced spatial inequalities. And along with this new

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socio-spatial topography of the new Berlin comes a discourse dismissing the long-held idea of the integrated European city. Different kinds of dividing lines are now running through the new Berlin landscape: still conspicuous, though in a different way than in the past, is the division between East and West, which is manifest in both mental and physical distance. Next, a qualitatively new boundary has emerged between Berlin and its outer periphery, the surrounding state of Brandenburg, as well as between the central city and its outer districts. More small-scale, but significant novel boundaries are separating newly emerging islands of wealth and upgraded spaces from their surrounding bleaker environment. Next to these, spaces of marginalization have formed that play an important role in marking off the newly upgraded "primary" spaces. Overlaying and intermeshing with these patterns of spatial inequality are social and cultural boundaries dividing immigrants from Germans. Also, the division between the milieus of the new federal government and of the old-established local government appeared to be a marking feature at least of the "transitional Berlin" (Der Spiegel, 15/2000). Even though this division between the camps of federal and state governments has spatial as well as cultural and political manifestations, we will have to leave it outside of our consideration in this piece.

OLD DIVIDING LINES

Except for two Eastern districts (Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg), where more than half of the residential population has been exchanged, West Berliners have mostly stayed in the West and East Berliners have mostly remained in the East. For many Westerners, mentally the boundary between "civilized West" and "foreign" or "wild East" still exists: what begins behind Alexanderplatz to them is not Friedrichshain, but terra incognita. The distance many Easterners feel towards the West – frequently mocked by Westerners as "ostalgia" or denounced as lack of democratic skills – may also be interpreted as an expression of disappointment with the lack of social participation afforded to them. The mutual distance between East and West is not merely a cultural gulf but finds political expression as well, as is dramatically underlined by the voting patterns. In the 1999 elections, the Western majority voted for the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) (49.3 percent), while the Eastern majority elected the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) (39.5 percent). The PDS dominated in every single one of the eleven Eastern districts (in Lichtenberg with 48 percent, in Mitte with 44.2 percent) and won almost all of the direct mandates in the East, whereas the CDU carried all the direct mandates in the West (except in Kreuzberg, where the Green Party won both mandates). In people's minds, in their everyday behavior, in the way they use the media, in their consumption

patterns, and especially politically the city continues to be divided between East and West.

Another inherited form of segregation is that by citizenship. It is more pronounced in Berlin than segregation by income, level of education, or employment position. Berlin's segregation index for citizenship is significantly higher than that of several West German large cities, which is due to the fact that very few immigrants live in East Berlin compared to the Western cities (in 1998: 5.7 percent as opposed to 17.4 percent in West Berlin). Large parts of East Berlin continue to be "free of foreigners." Concentrations of residents with other than German citizenship (i.e. more than 30 percent) are to be found in parts of Kreuzberg and in the northern areas of Neukölln and Schöneberg as well as in large parts of Wedding (Krätke and Borst 2000: 237). A "high percentage of foreigners" does not, however, automatically imply "bad neighborhood." Only in combination with factors of socioeconomic strain do "high proportions of non-Germans" become synonymous with "social problems." These concentrations do document, however, the specific conditions of access immigrants have found to German housing markets. During the 1960s and 1970s the so-called "guest workers" were able to access the substandard housing of old inner city tenements; in the 1990s, when immigrants have come mostly from Eastern Europe and when deindustrialization had seriously deteriorated the conditions for integrating them, the new migrants would find access only to public housing or to the large settlements at the fringes of East Berlin (ibid.; Häußermann and Kapphan 2000: 13).

NEW CONCENTRATIONS OF POVERTY AND DISADVANTAGE

Since the wall came down, mobility has increased tremendously: 35,000 Berliners leave the city every year for Brandenburg, mostly to the belt immediately around Berlin. This increased rate of mobility had the effect of intensifying earlier segregation trends, which heretofore had been less pronounced. Thus, for example, the wealthy southwestern districts Zehlendorf and Steglitz, as well as Wilmersdorf and Charlottenburg became more homogeneous, losing even more of their few low-income residents, while the traditional inner-urban working class districts of West Berlin (Kreuzberg, Wedding, Neukölln, Tiergarten) manifest disproportionally high gains in low-income, unemployed, and welfare populations.[2] While the socio-structural profile of the Western part of the city, characterized by some disparity already before unification, has become more strongly accentuated in its extremes, transformation in the East has been

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2 | The average monthly family net income in Zehlendorf amounts to DM 5,800, in Kreuzberg and Wedding to DM 2,900 (cf. Knecht 1999: 12).

more radical. Eastern districts, which knew hardly any socio-spatial segregation, have been undergoing dramatic changes. Overall, though, the structural socio-economic transformation of the city has located the loser districts mostly in the West.

While some studies make the increased mobility rates into the anchor of their analysis and interpret the intensifying concentrations of poverty and unemployment in certain neighborhoods as a consequence of the out-migration of "stable social groups" (cf. IfS and S.T.E.R.N. 1998), others emphasize the employment crisis and the enormous loss of jobs in the city, i.e. they interpret the growing unemployment and welfare numbers as consequence of deindustrialization.[3] The massive loss of jobs triggered by deindustrialization affected primarily the workers living in the traditional working class districts, many of whom immigrants, who before 1990 were primarily employed in manufacturing.

Since the mid-1990s, neighborhoods with high concentrations of social disadvantage have increasingly become – through a complex process of media and political construction – associated with dilapidation, violence, poverty, drugs and crime, and high rates of immigration (a process well known from U.S. cities since the 1970s). In Berlin, this process began with a *Spiegel* feature about Neukölln (Der Spiegel 43/1997) depicting this working class district as an "outcast ghetto," where shootouts have become everyday routine and public housing complexes have turned into slums. A torrent of similar articles swept through the local media as well during 1998, playing up violence and crime. A *Tagesspiegel* report turned "almost all of Kreuzberg into a no-go area," where especially the Wrangel neighborhood is described as "rotting away from the inside," the crime rate in this "foreigner ghetto is so immense that the German police has given up control" (quoted in Rada 1999: 19). Conservative politicians, such as the then-chair of the CDU delegates in Berlin's parliament, Landowsky, have spoken of "those uncontrollable centers of crime" (Der Tagesspiegel, September 19, 1998) and that "one should be courageous and blow up" public housing complexes like *Neues Kreuzberger Zentrum*. Within the Social-Democratic Party as well more and more voices have been calling for tearing down such housing complexes – since they are detrimental to the image of the capital city (in the words of the Senate's building director Stimmann).

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3 | Between 1990 and 1997 350,000 jobs have been lost, the number of unemployed rose, from 1993 to 1997, by 36 percent (West: 38 percent, East: 33 percent), the number of welfare recipients rose, from 1991 to 1998, by 14 percent (West: 12 percent, East: 17 percent). The overall unemployment rate in Berlin has been continually rising from 10 percent in 1991 to 16.4 percent in 2000, with the severest concentrations in Kreuzberg (29.2 percent), Neukölln (22.4 percent), Wedding (21.6 percent) and Tiergarten (21 percent) (cf. Krätke and Borst 2000: 276).

These different positions were unanimous in defining the new spatial concentrations of poverty as dangerous and as a threat to the public order. Similarly, a study commissioned by the Senate for Urban Development in 1997 to identify "problematic neighborhoods" uses this kind of language to describe these neighborhoods (cf. IfS and S.T.E.R.N. 1998). Particularly the categories of inner-city old housing stock and the public housing complexes in West Berlin are said to manifest "alarming socio-spatial polarization," as they are characterized by high population fluctuation, high immigrant rates, and high out-migration of employed, stable income groups. Public spaces in these neighborhoods are described as characterized by dilapidation, increasingly violent interactions, drug crimes, alcoholism, dominance of immigrant youths, and growing insecurity (ibid.).

Such associations are, however, both methodologically problematic[4] and substantively counterproductive, as they contribute to further stigmatize the residents of these neighborhoods. Obviously the new concentrations of poverty, of structural unemployment and of social disadvantage, which have emerged in the course of the 1990s (and which have been corroborated by a variety of studies – though with diverging explanations[5]) pose a threat to the social integration of the city and thus a challenge to urban development. But so do other divisions within the central city, which do not figure in the public debates, and which are not even perceived as problematic.

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4 | They are based on the perceptions of the author's interview partners, i.e. staff at the district and Senate administrations. Furthermore, to use the proportion of immigrants as an indicator for "neighborhoods characterized by social strain" runs the risk of interpreting the very presence of non-German residents as "social strain" (cf. Krätke and Borst 2000: 220, 238).

5 | In 1995, the Office of Health and Social Statistics showed, in a social space analysis pertaining to the whole city, that inner city districts were manifesting serious concentrations of indicators of social strain and that the social index of many of the already strained districts of Berlin had further deteriorated (cf. Hermann and Meinlschmidt 1995; Hermann et al. 1997). Methodologically, these studies used the so-called factor analysis. The data analysis of social statistics applied by *Sozialorientierte Stadtentwicklung* (IfS and S.T.E.R.N. 1998) concentrates on small-scale selective migration processes in the statistical areas of Berlin, in parts amplified by data on welfare, unemployment and immigrant rates. The study by Krätke and Borst (2000) employed a cluster analysis for its interpretation of socio-spatial disparities. Cluster analysis allowed them to extract nine different area types representing the different types of socio-structural spaces in both halves of Berlin.

ISLANDS OF WEALTH

Newly upgraded spaces, especially in the center of the city, have established invisible boundaries around them. The visitors and users of Friedrichstadt-Passagen (with their department store Galeries Lafayette, their banks and top-level offices) rarely venture just 300 meters south into one of the so-called "problem neighborhoods" of Kreuzberg, which is Turkish and apparently threatening to those north of it. Nor do its residents cross the new Checkpoint Charly towards the north, even though the sign "Attention, you are now leaving the American sector!" (which is still there!) no longer prohibits this border crossing. Nearby Potsdamer Platz is also no longer demarcated by a death strip, and still the adjacent poor quarter of Potsdamer Straße, with its dilapidated housing and cheap stores, remains cut off from the glitzy world of consumption and entertainment of Berlin's latest tourist attraction. In Mitte, investors speak of the "profit boundary" separating the low-income Rosenthaler Vorstadt from the lucrative "tourist racing path" Spandauer Vorstadt (which meanwhile counts more seats in restaurants, cafes and bars than residents) (cf. Rada 1999c: 19). And in Prenzlauer Berg, a similar stark new division has emerged between gentrified Kollwitzplatz and the "problem area" Helmholtzplatz nearby.

The gentrification processes spreading throughout East Berlin's inner city districts take the form of insular expansion. The people who have moved to Prenzlauer Berg in the course of the 1990s (70,000 new residents between 1991 and 1997) have higher incomes (by 50 percent on average), are younger, better educated, and form more single households than those who left (65,000 between 1991 and 1997). Their buying power and their very different consumptive behavior have dramatically transformed the local infrastructure: expensive boutiques and fancy restaurants have displaced old tenants, small shops, and alternative projects that could not keep up with skyrocketing rents (cf. Gude et al. 1999).

Insular gentrification processes have also taken place in the middle of poverty-ridden Kreuzberg. Luxurious lofts, e.g. in the Paul-Lincke-Höfe, typically present a modest outside front, but the inside of these courts manifests high-class loft-living with, in this case, "paradise gardens bathed in neon light installations by the American land artist Martha Schwartz" (Rada 1999b: 19). Introverted architectures, turning their backs on the city, express a withdrawal into the private space of "closed society" which no longer trusts public space. The people who live here do not need public parks. State secretary of urban development Stimmann makes himself their spokesperson as he favors, instead of the traditional public green spaces, small, high-standard so-called (in German) "pocket parks" inside the core of new building blocks.[6]

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6 | A parallel but opposite trend to this expansion of closed-off islands of new wealth, so-called primary spaces, has been the emergence of a new periphery also in the

So, hand in hand with this trend of privatized primary space and down-graded marginal space comes a transformation of public spaces. These undergo a degree and form of privatization that is novel for German cities. Shopping and entertainment zones in centrally located areas such as "Daimler City" (as Potsdamer Platz has informally been dubbed) as well as the train stations that have expanded into service and shopping centers have become privatized; while technically still public space, they are increasingly restricted to consuming and traveling customers. Some plazas, while still looking like public spaces, have already been sold, such as a small park called "Los Angeles Plaza" in downtown West Berlin that used to be a public green space. The city sold it to a private daughter corporation of the AG City (a coalition of Ku'damm businesses) in order to prevent that homeless people or drug addicts would use this park. A sign at the entrance of the park now lists the "house rules," such as "no eating, no drinking, no being there after dark."

These invisible boundaries protecting urban glamour zones require a type of control that is new both in quantitative and qualitative terms, to make sure that those who do not behave as the desired consumers are excluded. New forms of boundary policing have been introduced to Berlin and 36 so-called "danger-ous places" have been designated, where essential citizenship rights can be sus-pended: People and their belongings may be controlled without any concrete evidence of an offence, they can be ordered to leave the area, and they can be forbidden to even come there for up to three months. Special police units have been established (so-called "Operative Groups") that have been deployed since 1993 to target immigrants, beggars, youths, prostitutes, and drug users (cf. Eick 1998). Whoever disrupts the desired use of the downtown areas or does not re-spect the newly drawn boundaries, is removed by the "Operative Group Alex" or the "Operative Group City-West," often taken to the forest at the edge of the city.

Conflicts over the use of public space are also sparked within the so-called "problematic neighborhoods," especially where opportunities for further gen-trification present themselves in the small-scale coexistence of dilapidation and lavish upgrading, as is so characteristic of the current Prenzlauer Berg transi-tion. For example, the "dangerous zone" around Helmholtzplatz, a traditional poor people's neighborhood, where long-time residents and people on welfare as well as alternative projects and initiatives are disproportionately represented, has already come under development pressure as "attractive residential neigh-borhood with turn-of-the-century ambiance and a rapidly growing hip scene"

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middle of central districts of the city. Nine wild encampments with about 700 residents had settled at various sites in the internal periphery of the city, particularly where the wall used to be, but the Senate forced them out to the edge of the city, with massive po-lice force, creating new islands of marginality that are stigmatized and often unwanted by the "indigenous" German residents (cf. Sambale and Veith 1998).

(Rada 2000: 20; cf. Bernt 2001). The public debate about this conflict over the direction of the neighborhood depicts the alcoholics – who with the restoration of the park literally are marginalized and squeezed out of the park – as symbol of a no longer desired use of the park. For other "problematic neighborhoods" (such as around Kottbusser Tor in Kreuzberg or around Potsdamer Straße in Schöneberg), it is the drug users who get turned into the symbols responsible for making the area a "dangerous zone." Deployment of the "Operative Group Potse" and "Operative Group SO 36" in fact hinder or even prevent the outreach work of drug counseling and social aid organizations (Eick 1999: 100). And media campaigns which scandalize the dilapidation of public space and demand more security and police forces in order to address the consequences of spatially concentrated poverty, also no longer depict poverty as a social problem but exclusively as a threat to the public order.

Political Strategies Against the Polarized City?

Both the "flight of middle class Germans" from the city and the growing socio-spatial polarization and fragmentation have been perceived as evidence of a creeping Americanization – which politicians claim ought to be avoided at all costs. Two measures have been put in place to counter these tendencies: *Planwerk Innenstadt* to counter the exodus of urbanites was passed by the Senate as guiding concept for the development of the central city in 1999, and a community management program for "problem neighborhoods" was introduced in 1999.

Late in 1996 the Senator for Urban Development introduced a first version of its strategy *Planwerk Innenstadt*, i.e. a master plan for the inner city. The declared goal of the plan was to reconnect and restructure the East and West Berlin downtowns. But the focus has in fact been on the East, where the plan described the area between Alexanderplatz and Schlossplatz as "in need of transformation": in spite of its excellent location opening up all the possibilities of primary space, it was described as presenting, in its extant form, a "developmental barrier given the international urban competition." Besides overcoming the "disruption" which urban planning of the modern age (i.e. real existing socialism) had wreaked on the urban fabric, the plan was to create an urban environment attractive to so-called "urban citizens." The existing prefab highrises were not considered as suitable to prevent the exodus of high-income groups from the city. However, current residents were not involved in the plan, and its publication triggered outbursts of resentment from Eastern citizens who happened to like their familiar environment.

Still, in order to more fully realize the potential value of this location, the plan called for more housing to be built, in the form of (initially 28,000, then only 20,000) condominium apartments. The assumption was that individual

home ownership would be the best way to upgrade the central city, guarantee a return to the private investors, and bring about the necessary change in "urban citizenship consciousness." This "urban citizen," to whose supposed needs the plan is oriented, is connoted as embodiment of urban culture. Thus, the Senator for Urban Development, Peter Strieder, gave these reasons for his strategy in a piece titled "In Search of Urban Citizens": "We are losing those who embody urban culture. [...] It is our task to reactivate this urban citizenry. An important step in this direction is, for example, that we are making a lucrative offer for housing property in the city to those who want it" (Strieder 1998: 11).

In spite of the subsidization of urban land for home ownership formation, the envisioned wealthy urban professionals have not been coming forth in sufficient numbers. This seems to be, at least in part, due to the fact that the new lofts and luxury apartments around Friedrichswerder, Molkenmarkt and Spittelmarkt are unaffordable even for Berlin's professional managerial class at square meter prices of DM 8,000 and up, and sufficiently rich people are not interested to locate here (Rada 2000: 19).[7] Housing policy – which in Berlin used to be that of a tenant city – has completely shifted towards a homeowner city: while subsidization of condo conversion is expanded, funding for social housing has been drastically curtailed, rent control has been terminated, each year 30,000 more housing units are "freed" from being reserved for low-income groups, and the public housing associations are being sold.

Ostensibly in order to stem the advance of social polarization, the Senate attempts to keep or to attract high-income households in (to) the city. This strategy appears logical when processes of impoverishment are seen primarily as consequence of the exodus of high-income "representatives of urban culture" as a ferment for the health of the city. However, the reasons for the accelerated processes of decay of the 1990s seem to be more complex and having their primary cause in the industrial restructuring and ensuing employment crisis. The way the *Planwerk* is designed, it is not likely to lead to a multiplication of different inner city users, but rather to replace low-income residents with upscale groups and to "clean up" the downtown. At the same time, it does not appear likely to stop the suburbanization of middle class families, for whom the move to the belt around Berlin is both more affordable and more attractive than the upscale condos in the built-up city.

The second strategy, which the Senate developed in response to the increasing social segregation, is a program for the social revitalization of declining urban areas implemented in 1999. With reference to the neighborhoods identified as most "problematic" or "at risk of becoming problematic" in the study commissioned earlier (cf. IfS and S.T.E.R.N. 1998), this strategy has an

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7 | For a critical review of the *Planwerk* overall see Architektenkammer Berlin (1997).

explicit sociospatial focus. In fifteen of these areas, community development agencies and teams were established that are charged by city government to use integrated approaches to mobilize local resources, to activate and empower residents, to initiate job creation, to attract small businesses as well as develop neighborhood-based subsistence work (Berliner Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Umweltschutz und Technologie 1999). The goal of the program is not desegregation or redistribution – such goals are no longer seen as feasible. Instead, it defines itself as an attempt to mitigate the worst effects of restructuring and exclusion and to slow down the downward spiral, in which these neighborhoods are diagnosed to be caught, by some stabilizing support.

For this, the Senate invests DM 300,000 per agency per year, stipulating that the "neighborhood managers" are to increase this modest budget through funds from various European Union programs (ESF and EFRE), from different German funding programs supporting the insertion of unemployed and welfare recipients into the labor market (ABM and HzA) and various programs subsidizing construction, as well as through funds available through the recently passed federal program "Social City."[8]

With the establishment of new neighborhood offices, the Senate circumvented existing initiatives and community organizations, which have been in place in many of these areas, arguing that it was important to bypass those active groups, which "again and again demand resources instead of activation" (Häußermann and Kapphan 2000: 226). In various cases, organizations that have built themselves a reputation as tenant advocates or renewal agents have been inserted into the new constructions, which have drawn on a pool of employment agencies, social planning offices, economic development bureaus and enterprise consulting firms. In this way the Senate has created a parallel infrastructure overlapping with but in part displacing the existing community infrastructure – one that focuses more on economic and job creation development on the one hand and on conflict moderation and (apolitical) technical expertise on the other.

Some communities have resisted the attribute "problematic neighborhood": they resented being stigmatized by the definition as "dangerous place" and they did not want to be given a neighborhood management office. At Boxhagener Platz, for example, residents, community groups, and the district's (Friedrichshain) city council person responsible for urban development demanded that the area be recognized as "milieu protection area" (which would provide legal protection against condo conversions as well as against rapid rent increases based on private modernization) instead of as "problematic neighborhood."

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8 | Passed in September 1999, this federal program channels ca. DM 5 million to Berlin neighborhood management, as of 2001, each neighborhood will have about DM 500,000 to distribute yearly (cf. Holl 2002).

The concept of the Senate, however, does not see rising rents but the out-migration of high-income groups as responsible for the decline, the most appropriate solution for which would be subsidizing the formation of homeownership (Krätke and Borst 2000: 280).

Both strategies of the Senate, then, aim to enhance the attractiveness of the city. The neighborhood management program does so by striving to prevent the most visible manifestations of urban decay such as vandalism and deterioration of public space (perceived as threatening the image and hence the competitiveness of the city). And the *Planwerk* does so by mobilizing and subsidizing primary urban land for the assumed needs of so-called "urbanites." While the latter strategy actually contributes to accelerating the social polarization and segregation processes triggered by the economic restructuring, neighborhood management will more likely consolidate the position of the targeted neighborhoods as basically marginal spaces, where those left behind by the restructuring are to self-manage their marginalization with self-help, social economy, and civil conflict moderation – and at low cost.

Both policy responses thus actually tend to support the emergence of a pattern of centrality vs. marginality, the incipient formation of which we can already observe: islands of luxury and zones of upscale urbanites cut off and divided by multiple boundaries from marginal, downgraded zones that are concentrating nearby. While entrusting the downgraded neighborhoods to programs of community management aims precisely at stabilizing them as such – as downgraded zones –, the visible and invisible boundaries between these disparate zones require new and more intensive forms of surveillance and control than the integrated, socially mixed, and relatively homogenous city ever needed. The pattern of dualization and polarization as well as the new forms of policing are well known from the U.S. metropolis which Berlin's politicians so anxiously claim to want to prevent.

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