Social Housing in Preserved Buildings The Case of the Valongo Architectural Complex – Rio de Janeiro. *KIPERMAN, Flavia Boghossian* (*)

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1. Introduction

This study serves as example of technical interventions for the safeguarding and recovery of the Historical Heritage in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Stressing the cultural memory of the building, it was possible to recover the original volume as well as the barely identifiable social-cultural dignity. The building was therefore fit out for its new purpose whilst respecting its history.

Large Brazilian cities are expanding to the outskirts and slums are increasing near the central regions, leading us to reflect on the quality of housing of the poor population. Usually, residents with low income occupy preserved buildings in historical centers. This way, by living in these buildings, they can pay little, live near the work market and make use of all the infrastructure of a consolidated neighborhood. These conditions are favorable to the profile of the occupant but contribute to the bad conservation of the buildings.

At the turn of the century, working-class neighborhoods, slums and back-to-back dwellings were common in Rio de Janeiro. Today, as they are considered an almost irregular form of housing, these buildings are exposed to various forms of degradation, resulting in exposure to personal risk and the consequent loss of the building of relevant historical importance.

The Valongo Architectural Complex, composed of houses numbered 13 to 21, is located in the rocky hill of Valongo, center of Rio de Janeiro. The houses were built between 1829 and 1871, in a style that was common in the mid-nineteenth century with formal repetition of colonial standards. However, they also present benefits of the former period, such as primary water and sewage installations, internal patios for sanitary use, ventilation of quarters and windows with shutters.

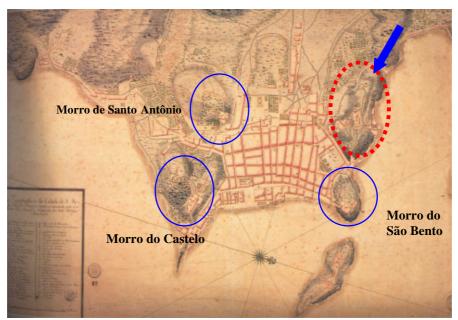
Although internal and external alterations continued in these building throughout the years, the complex still preserves the popular interpretation of eighteenth and nineteenth century noble architecture. Property of Santa Casa de Misericórdia do Rio de Janeiro, these buildings are solely used for housing and are currently occupied by 18 families living in poor sanitary conditions. The Valongo Architectural Complex Restoration Project seeks to improve the quality of life of these residents, recover the original volume of the buildings and subsequently prevent the formation of slums.

2. Brief History

Occupation of the city of São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro began in 1565, at the Morro (hill) Cara de Cão and the Pão de Açúcar. The city centre, as we know it today, was secondly occupied only after the French were expelled from the Guanabara Bay two years later and the small population was transferred to Morro do Castelo. At this time, the three-nave church, the Jesuit school and the fort were built. After the layout of streets and sideways leading to the lowlands were defined, the city became more organized.

When the bay region was definitively conquered, the population started to occupy the foot of the hills that called for numerous landfills. All trading and unloading of necessary goods for the survival of the expanding population was carried out in these areas.

Consequently, a path along the beach was formed connecting the Morro de Manoel Brito where Benedictine monks settled in the beginning of the seventeenth century and that was later named Morro de São Bento. The Franciscans settled in the Morro de Santo Antônio and eventually in the Morro da Conceição where they built the chapel of Nossa Senhora da Conceição in 1634. In this chapel, the Palácio dos Bispos (Bishop's Palace) was built in the eighteenth century. Slowly, the public roads parallel and perpendicular to the beach and between the four hills were thus delimited.



"Topographic Map of the City of S. Sebastião do rio de Janeyro..." Original manuscript from André Vaz Figueira, of the National Library, Rio de janeiro, 1750. (REIS, 2000:169)

Morro (Hill) da Conceição

Others Hills



Location of the Valongo Architectural Complex.

Between 1645 and 1647, the Chamber initiated the sale of seaside land lots. Houses made of bricks, stone, lime and tiles were commonplace; some had a second floor. Around 1715, the Morro da Conceição Fort was built as well as an access route to the sea that began near Valongo.

The former Rua do Valongo (Valongo Street) was not definitively open in 1741 and was only lengthened in 1758. This region was named Valongo for its similarity with a locality in the outskirts of the Portuguese city of Porto and was extended because of the country houses in the location.

In 1769, the slave market was transferred to Valongo, which hugely contributed to the growth of the region. Many of the port and commercial activities established there, as well as the slave warehouse - the Trapiche do Valongo.

At the start of the nineteenth century, the city suffered a radical urban transformation that until then had occupied areas made up of dried mangroves and marsh landfills. Most of the population was slaves and a small administrative, military, merchant and religious elite ran the city.

In 1808, the Portuguese Royal Family was transferred to The Colony that caused dramatic political and social changes in the city. The arrival of approximately ten thousand people from the Portuguese court in Rio de Janeiro, that until then only had fifty thousand inhabitants of which half were slaves, can be evaluated by the appearance of six hundred houses and a hundred country houses between 1808 and 1818.

By 1820, the neighborhood was considered "quite crowded" and many commercial establishments moved to an area near Prainha, between the sea and Mangue (mangrove) do Saco de São Diogo. After 1830, there was a notable increase in the number of landfills and storehouses in the region from Prainha to Valongo. During this decade, the poorer population became denser in this region due to a lack of easy transportation. The elite, on the other hand, moved towards the southern areas and suburbs of the city, making weekend country houses their permanent residences.

After slave trading became illegal in the mid-nineteenth century, Valongo assumed the characteristics of a port with import and export warehouses. In 1840, the slave market in Valongo was deactivated and a monument square was built in the location. At the end of the nineteenth century, rapid urban growth and the appearance of manufacturing, factories and the modernization of public services transformed the city.

The Valongo country house, present in 1866 plans, probably belonged to a "rough-edged" tradesman considering the proportions of the building and the strategic location, facing the quay of Valongo. The houses numbered from 13 to 21, objects of this study, are embedded in the rocky hill of Valongo, in the Saúde neighborhood, and were built between the end of the eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. The properties underwent reforms and were adapted according to the tastes and aesthetics of the period.

The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century are characterized by the great changes in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The start of capitalist production, the end of slavery, the passing of the economy from export merchant to industrial capitalist, the fall of coffee, the rapid increase in urban population, the diffusion of bourgeois values and the definition of new social classes resulted in the modernization of the city together with accelerated urban growth.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Morro da Conceição was already fully occupied and a succession of reforms would eventually separate the hill from the coast and the frantic urban development that characterized this period. The Ladeira (slope) do Valongo, that connects the hill to the Rua (Street) Camerino, was opened and named Ladeira do João-de-Gatinhas ('*Gatinha*', meaning crawl), as one had to practically crawl up the slope to get to the road. One sideway was connected to the other by means of stairs, interconnecting roads, forming quite a labyrinth that extended to the top of Morro da Conceição.

To give continuity to Avenida (Avenue) Passos and the project of Mayor Pereira Passos (1903-1906), Rua Camerino was extened to 17m. For this, almost all buildings on the right side of the road had to be demolished except a small interval on the Morro da Conceição hillside, by the Valongo country house. A tall sustenance wall was built to avoid dislocation of the hill and the interval was landscaped with impressive stairways and a garden full of statues. Inaugurated in 1906, the garden was named Jardim do Valongo.

In the 30's, a group of freshmen of the current IPHAN (National Intitute of History and Artistic Heritage), including Rodrigo de Mello Franco and Lúcio Costa, believed that traces of a "national identity" could be found in architecture and art. Properties subject to preservation were characterized by examples of other periods and styles, mainly colonial, if considered indicative or exceptional for the history of architecture in Brazil.

I consider that the Federal Heritage Register of No.21 in 1938 was justified although the houses in the Valongo Archetectural Complex underwent continuous reforms without following pertinent conservation criteria nonetheless serving as notable examples of civil architecture of the period.

Numerous plans for the preservation of the Morro da Conceição region were proposed but this section of Rio was almost forgotten amongst the agitation of the city center for almost all of the twentieth century. Today, the Morro still conserves its characteristic residential use with great landmarks like the Palácio Episcopal (Priest Palace), the Pedra do Sal, the Fortaleza (Fortress) da Conceição and the Observatório (Observatory) do Valongo, preserved as memorial elements of the city.

As one walks along the hill, time still seems to pass slowly: people talking in the streets, sitting on the pavement or at bar tables, children running. There is little trace of the Portuguese and Spanish descendents that first lived there. Many artists and people of other states moved to the hill seeking tranquility while remaining close to the commercial center, characterizing an almost new occupation and leaving the impression that the old residents are slowly leaving the area.

However, housing still preserves its form and proportion, the design of the roads is similar and we can still see the old peanut brittle paving. Sadly, characteristic twentieth century alterations in the façades are also present, from Art Deco and Eclectic make-up to the dreadful aluminum frames. Nonetheless, few buildings clash with the standards of the Morro.

Luckily, the Morro da Conceição was almost forgotten for some years and suffered no major damage from modernization in the beginning of the twentieth century and the great real estate speculations of the 50's. This important historic and urban site became a living link between the past and future, eternally present in the urban and individual memory, forming a strong identity for its residents.

In this period of globalization, our hope is that conservation and permanence of this monument can be guaranteed so it can live in the memory of its people for generations to come.

3. Directive Plan

The following article describes the Directive Plan for the restoration of the houses 13 to 21 of the Valongo Architectural Complex. Intervention plans were elaborated with maintenance for habitual use, adapting the existing spaces to the original volumes and current demands for habitation.

The complex is currently exposed to various forms of degradation like infiltrations, deep cracks and visible sewage. As a result, residents are exposed to situations of risk and the city is close to losing a building of relevant historical importance. For the feasibility of this intervention in the complex, we suggest a division in stages in the form of a Directive Plan.

The first stage should be focused on the outer walls of houses 19 to 21 that deserved special attention when Federal Heritage Registered. Additionally, this stage should consider cleaning, conservation and restoration. For the second stage, we suggest compatibility of the façades of the remaining houses with the two that have been restored in the prior stage. The entire complex should be treated to preserve the environment and surrounding areas of houses 19 to 21.

Finally, for the third stage we indicate regulations for interior building adaptations and clearance for internal patios, using low-income parameters for regulation of the houses.



The Valongo Architectural Complex today. Photo by author in 2002.

4. Current characteristics

The cadastral field survey was carried out between April and May 2003. A total of 18 residential units were registered in the complex, from houses 13 to 21. We also used the surveys of architect Jurema Kopke Eis in 1978, documents from the Santa Casa da Misericórdia, including a 1829 Legacy, and the IPHAN files where we found a sketch from 1938 showing the composition of the complex at second floor level.

Based on these documents and comparing the 1938 plants with the current dimensional survey, we verified that: the coverage area increased to double the size, extensions were added in all units and the degradation and near disappearance of the original roof replaced with new coverage of undulated type tiles and concrete slabs. There is no formal register of skylights or clerestories.

The presence of the forbidden chambers, the *alcovas*, in the 1935 plant were not verified, only those stated in the Santa Casa da Misericórdia Legacy of 1829, so there is no physical proof of their existence. According to the 1870 maps, we could identify the internal patios, which were demands of the new sanitation policy of the Mayor Pereira Passos in the twentieth century.

Some of the openings are still original, as verified in the Santa Casa Legacy; conserving the characteristic mid-nineteenth century frames with glass light shades and shuttered windows. The doors still have some original boards whilst others have more recent paneling and fittings.

With the extension of the Rua Camerino at the beginning of the twentieth century, we have the second records of improvements to the complex. According to the Santa Casa files, in 1934 conservation, replacement of wet room tiling and wooden parts from the ceilings and roofs.

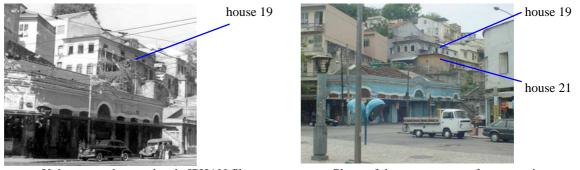
In 1956, Santa Casa carried out another large reform where only the structural walls were reused and new internal divisions were built. It was probably at this time that the occupational rates increased in the complex. In 1969, an audit by the Santa Casa portrayed the situation presented in the comparative chart below:

House	1935	1969	1999	2003
13	1 unit	7 "houses"	8 units	8 units
15	1 unit	2 "houses"	2 units	2 units
17	1 unit	1 "house"	1 unit	2 units
19	1 unit	1 "house" second floor	1 unit	1 unit
21	1 unit. (ext. of 19)	3 "houses" + 1 second floor	5 units	5 units
total	5 units	15 units	17 units	18 units

I believe that by 1969, this was already a low-income residential complex. Does, the "house" mentioned by the author of the audit represent the number of families that lived in each building or the actual number of residential units? Whatever the case, we consider that a residential unit has its own kitchen and bathroom. Furthermore, this type of collective facility does not exist in the complex and there is no register that indicates this peculiarity.

In the 1829 legacy left by the owner of the Santa Casa, the complex was mentioned as having 3 houses and 4 dwellings. Furthermore, it is written at the: "*indice Geral do Tombo dos Prédios do Patrimônio da Santa Casa de Misericórdia – Hospital Geral* (the General Index of Heritage Registered Buildings of the Santa Casa de Misericórdia – General Hospital), *clearly states that the loft of No. 19 is in fact on the second floor, leading to the conclusion that it belongs to another unit of the same patrimony, with entrance in the second turn of the slope"*.

The three houses mentioned above would be today's houses 19, 17 and 15; 19 having two dwellings, second floor and two-storey, forming 4 dwellings in 3 houses. Would this number 19 be one of the first examples of multi-family housing in Rio de Janeiro?



Unknown author, undated. IPHAN file

Photo of the present state of conservation.

Compared to the evolution of this complex between 1969 and 1999, there was little change in the number of residential units and, with the example of 13 and 21 where the number of "houses" grew to 2 units, it was emphasized that the living area increased in most of the units. Even today, a few colonial type standards can be identified, resisting so many years of local intervention like, for example, single-lap interlocking roof tiles, overhanging cornice and archways with capital finishing with transom in mortar, amongst others.

Below is a description of each building, divided numerically to facilitate visualization of the transformations to the complex.

House number 21.

Number 21 is considered the back yard and wall of number 19. Today it is totally occupied, of the same length as number 19 and faces the right side of the Ladeira (slope), parallel to Rua Camerino (Camerino street).

It was built in the same period as number 19 and the building was particularly registered as Federal Heritage by IPHAN. The interior arrangement presented in the 1935 floor plan is kitchen, storage, store and a yard that divides the floor in two. On one side of the building, there are two units at first and second floor level, extensions of number 19 and a stairway leading to the two-storey building in number 19.

According to the Legacy and the description of Eis, it is always described as a two-storey building. However, for two owners it is a frontal rooftop terrace. They stated that number 21 is a "two-storey building" and number 19 is a "first floor under upper storey", indicating a property with two numbers. Regardless, I believe that number 21 is simply an irregular quarter built in the former yard of house number 19. By building a wall that divided the lot from the path, the limits of the unit were established, which probably occurred in the beginning of the twentieth century.

Today there are 5 residential units in a precarious state of conservation. There are infiltrations of rain water, visible sewage, rooms without ventilation or light recently built, unstable slabs and exposed ironwork.

House number 19

This two-storey building overlooks the two stretches of the Ladeira. As stated above, this is the oldest model of the complex, built between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, maintaining original aspects of the façade.

In the nineteenth century, this building already had two owners; one lived on the first floor with access to the Ladeira on the left; and the other lived in the upper floor with access to the Ladeira parallel to rua Imperatriz, the present day rua Camerino.

The façade, which originally overlooked the sea, faces the left side of the Ladeira and still has the five original windowsills, door, cornice and over-head ridges with "curved tiles", according to the Legacy. The other façade has four windows with sills that are hidden by the numerous extensions of number 21 to this day.

This building is very altered and is almost unrecognizable from Camerino road because of the many extensions and add-on. It seems to have blended with number 21 and the roof no longer exists. In the second storey, there are two large rooms and two small rooms, a wing with a kitchen and a prism for ventilation and daylight; today, the wing and prisms are covered with additions. The second unit, facing the slope, is isolated from the rest of the building.

House number 17

This house is also located on the left stretch of the Ladeira, between buildings 15 and 19, all built in the same period. According to the Santa Casa files, it only had two floors at the front because it is over a quarry; the first floor was supposedly a store.

Today, the first floor has an unpleasant aspect, dark and humid, with only a room and stairway leading to the second storey. The number given to the "house" has only one residential unit and prisms for ventilation and daylight are all occupied by irregular additions.

Two more residential units were built on what would be the attic (second storey) or part of a "conjugated garret" to be shared with the neighbor (see description of house number 15), that also occupied the ventilation prisms. Each unit has an independent access, one through the two-storey house in number 21 and the other through number 13, both of which cross corridors between the units. This extension of the second storey occurs in both buildings 15 and 17, probably built in 1905 from the connection of the two attics in these buildings.

House number 15

This building is located on the left side of the Ladeira, between numbers 13 and 17. They were most likely built in 1867, maintaining the original façade of a door with shutters and two windows with sills. Today, there are two residential units on the first floor and two on the second floor with 70% of the ventilation and daylight prisms occupied, invading part of building number 13.

According to the Santa Casa de Misericórdia files, this building had an attic with "...two conjugated garrets built on a single base, garrets of 32,0m² and 55,35m² respectively, with a total area of 87.31m²". The front of the building is 5,57m with a depth of 15,80m and a total area of 88,60m². It can therefore be concluded that either these "conjugated garrets" were a new storey or one garret was built for each building, in number 15 and next to number 17, justifying the extended storey found in these buildings.

House number 13

Built by the Santa Casa de Misericórdia between 1867 and 1871, this house is located at the end of the left side stretch of the Ladeira do Morro do Valongo. It is a second floor building that is more elevated than the slope and connects to the complex by means of a passageway, limited by a door, in house number 15. The delimitations are the slope, the internal patio and the quarry in the two rear façades. Originally, it had two rooms, two larger rooms, a wing-type extension with a kitchen and pantry, and a shed-type extension stuck to building 15, with a room.

Taking into account the recent additions, this "wing" with kitchen and pantry was changed into a twostorey building with four residential units and the original first floor volume was converted into 2 residential units with additions. The "shed" that is connected to number 15 was transformed into part of two residential units with access through the internal patio, belonging to the two-storey building in number 15.

The openings of the façade are altered in position and quantity. Originally, they were four windows with sills whilst today, to allow access to one of the units to the front of the slope, there is a door and three windows.

5. Proposal

Stage 1 – Restoration of the total volume of houses 19 and 21

Firstly, we compared the existing structure to the sketches elaborated by Barreto in 1938. We found that the structure was basically altered from one-family to multi-family and the ventilation and daylight prisms were totally occupied.

We propose the continuance of residential use. Currently, these two houses have 6 units with areas varying from 150 m² to 25 m² per unit. Therefore, we chose to establish minimal square meter footage of 30, resulting in four units ranging from 79 m² to 43 m². We also premise the least possible intervention to avoid damage to the buildings.

There is little information available concerning the visual appearance of this roof but some suppositions based on photos and architectural prospecting justify our proposal. We suggest that the roof in the entrance of house number 19 be redone according to the photographic records found in the files and that the portion of the entrance of 21^{A} recover the initial roof of two slopes.

The use of typically colonial style ceramic tiles, interlocking single-lap type, is indicated for the entire roof of both houses 19 and 21. For the portion of roof on 21B and 21C, we propose a common open patio with a protective low fence painted in black. This volume should be behind the main façade to protect the patio from view.

For the façade of house number 19, we suggest the removal of the unoriginal veranda at the front and the French style ceramic lintels over each second floor window. According to the tests results on the mortar, the entire façade will be cleaned and recovered following the original outline. Regarding color, we indicate ochre, found in the prospecting of the pictorial layers.

The openings of the façade facing Rua Camerino are very altered. A succession of construction work without concern for original characteristics removed some of the important guidelines for preservation. In old photos however, we can still see a clean façade so, according to research, these openings can be redone.

The frames will be maintained on the façade of number 19. For the façades of Rua Camerino, we will use identical replicas were we have verified that frames were indeed present. The windows will be made in the same size and style but without the arched light shades.

<u>Stage 2 – Compatibility of façades</u>

For this stage we suggest the compatibility of façades of houses 17, 15 and 13 with those of houses 19 and 21, restored in stage one.

A 5 cm. frieze will be made for houses 17 and 15, linking the transom of house 19 to the end of the façade, thus limiting what would have probably been the original volume of these houses and separating the much altered upper volume that lacks any register of its shape.

The frames on the first floor of house 17 will be maintained but those of the two-storey house will be altered to fit the format of the frames in house 19. The French tile lintels will also be removed. The frames of the upper storey that extend to house 15 will be adjusted to fit the new format used on house 21.

The frames of house 15 will be altered in shape to fit the configuration of door and windows stated in the legacy. The window frames and the door with the current groove-fitted panels will also be maintained.

In house number 13, the door leading to the patio and the windows facing the slope stairway will be kept in their original form. The four windows facing the sea stated in the legacy will be reopened according to research in the location. Furthermore, the frames will follow the standards of the house.

Stage 3 - Sanitation of houses 17, 15 and 13

We propose sanitation of all units in this stage, clearing the internal patios to ensure ventilation to all rooms.

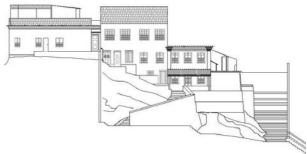
Houses 17 and 15 have rear patios that adapt to the local topography and provide ventilation to the interior of the house. The internal patio in house 13 is full of irregular construction work that protrudes from the façade. Therefore, we propose clearing the patio and removing the recently built second storey.

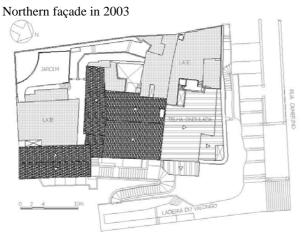
These alterations will result in a decrease in residential units from 18 to 12. With a more adequate square meter footage, we ensure bathrooms, kitchens and private service areas for each unit as well as ventilation in all rooms.

House	Area in 2002 (m ²)	Area in the Feasibility Study (m ²)	Added or Diminished Area (m ²)
21 A	24.81	43.67	+18.86
21 B	39.74	-	-
21 C	87.88	54.97	-32.91
21 D	175.92	71.77	-104.15
21	40.46	-	-
HOUSE 21	368.81	170.41	-198.41
HOUSE 19	40.01	79.60	+39.59
17 A	78.93	91.81	+12.88
17 B	44.62	-	-
HOUSE 17	118.94	91.81	-27.13
15 A	16.88	-	-
15 B	60.10	81.43	+21.33
HOUSE 15	76.98	81.43	+4.45
13 A	61.77	59.47	-2.3
13 B	37.44	37.44	0
13 C	60.57	46.97	-13.6
13 D	69.97	26.47	-43.5
13 E	41.65	28.18	-13.47
13 F	88.07	44.04	-44.03
13 G	37.95	-	-
HOUSE 13	397.42	242.57	-154.85
TOTAL	1002.16	665.82	-336.34

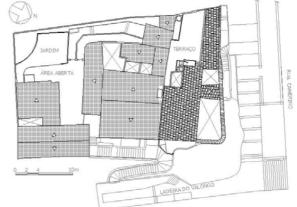
Below is the new chart of the areas:



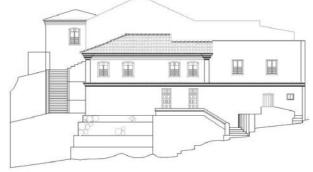




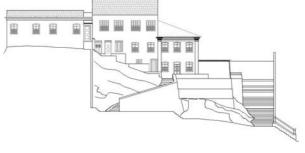
Western façade in 2003



Coverage Plan in 2003



Proposed Coverage Plan



Proposed Northern Façade

Proposed Western Façade

6. Conclusion

The restoration architect specializing in historical monuments must clearly have historical, technical and methodological knowledge. Moreover, the professional must also have humility and respect to ensure the preservation of all the characteristics acquired by the building during the years.

The Register as Cultural Heritage of this complex was suggested in 1938, and it was possible to recover its historical appearance with this project. Furthermore, structural problems could be solved, granting stability and greater comfort to the residents whilst ensuring preservation of this treasure for years to come.

The architect must decide and conduct a restoration project without leaving his or her mark. Intervention with a cultural property requires discretion and honesty as the principal characters are the past, present and future linked in history and represented in the memory of the community.

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