

Cautious urban redevelopment in Berlin **Case study in Spandauer Vorstadt**

Urban redevelopment means development in the existing site, instead of spreading to the new area. Berlin, the new capital of Germany after reunification, was almost in ruins after the Second World War. This special history in Berlin makes it a city which experienced a big scale of reconstruction and redevelopment. The city government of Berlin did not take a strategy of big scale of new construction; instead, urban development takes place with a low profile – hence the title of this paper, cautious redevelopment and critical reconstruction. The link to the main congress theme is evident: Cautious redevelopment and reconstruction are likely to contribute to the avoidance of urban sprawl.

1. Urgent need for urban redevelopment in Berlin after reunification

In Berlin, after the war half million apartments were destroyed, which is almost one third of the apartments before the war. That means, almost half of the buildings were destroyed, and many were heavily damaged. Only 20% were slightly damaged or not damaged. In the district of Mitte and Tiergarten, there were more than 50% percent of buildings registered as heavily damaged or demolished¹. Besides, there are many social and technical facilities such as schools, hospitals or energy and water supply, or cultural facilities that were damaged.

After reunification in 1990, the topic “Urban Redevelopment” became a spotlight of the city politics. The bad situation and huge vacancy of buildings from the emperor time and other old buildings aroused annoyance and big protests from citizens in the last period of DDR time. The reunification makes urban redevelopment throughout the city possible. More important was that it gave an impressive and attractive picture of West German cities to the citizens in the East.

Furthermore, the need for urban redevelopment arose by itself after reunification. The reintroduced capital relationships needed a new functional equipment and social space. Private economic investments put the whole system in a question².

2. Programs concerning redevelopment and heritage conservation

2.1 Urban redevelopment program

Since the 1970s, the federal government started a large urban redevelopment program in the states of previous West Germany, indicating a significant change of policy from external expansion to inner-city rehabilitation and improvement. It aims at modernization and improvement of buildings and urban infrastructure in cities and towns, either in the city centre or other parts of the city. The Federal, the State and the City government each shares 1/3 of the project cost³. All the measures and procedures follow the Urban Redevelopment Law (which was originally introduced as a separate law, but it was later incorporated in the the Federal Building Code, §§ 136 to 164b). Urban redevelopment is not obligatory for the city government. According to §142BauGB, the city government *may*, but *not must* take measures of urban redevelopment⁴. In Germany, since 1970s, the whole county has widely recognized the importance of urban conservation. Therefore, most cities have decided to take measures and applied for funds from the federal government.

After reunification in 1989/1990, this program extended to the eastern states. In Berlin there were 38 redevelopment areas in the western part before reunification. After Berlin became the new capital of Germany in 1990, the Senate Department for Urban Development designated 22 areas for redevelopment projects by three redevelopment statutes⁵. In 2007,

the federal government provided 160 Million € for all the states, including 532 projects in former eastern states and 518 in former western states⁶. After 10 years in 2003 almost half of the apartments were renovated, the population grows continuously at average 8.5%, in the eastern redevelopment area at 10%⁷.

2.2 Urban heritage conservation program

Urban Heritage Conservation is another federal funding program since 1991. The program focuses on preserving historic city centers. Before reunification of Germany in 1991, in former Eastern Germany many historic districts in towns and cities such as Quedlinburg, Weimar, Rostock, Wismar, or Görlitz, were lacking maintenance and restoration. Many buildings were in bad condition. Instead, some of historic buildings were demolished and modern new block buildings took place.

The situation made it necessary to immediately begin a process of urban conservation in the cities of the new German states and the eastern part of Berlin. Hence, the federal government initiated this program shortly after reunification in order to save the historic city centers from further decaying.

The subsidies are only for historic cities in former Eastern Germany. And later the program was extended to the former western Germany. The program Urban Heritage Conservation “does not focus on the building as an isolated monument but on the preservation of historic city centers as ensembles. These ensembles may also include buildings and public spaces not classified as monuments”⁸.

The federal government, state government and city government take 40%, 40% and 20% of the total subsidies, over and above the costs to be borne by the private building owners. In the case of Berlin, which is both a city and a state, it has to pay 60%. In 2007, there are 90 Million € provided by federal government for the former eastern states and eastern part of Berlin⁹.

Financial support is to “ensure and conserve structure and function of threatened historical city centers with monument value”¹⁰, which means:

- To protect valuable buildings, historical ensembles or special physical structure with historical, artistic or urban significance,
- Modernisation and repair of valuable buildings or ensembles,
- Preserving and redesigning streets and squares or plazas that are of significance to urban development or are worthy of preservation as monuments,
- Implementation of regulatory measures to conserve and restoration of historical urban landscape with agreement of states,
- Extra costs of city center for arrangement of buildings and their surroundings for trade, services and compatible business and
- Performance of redevelopment agency and other contractors to consultancy of property owners and investors about adherence of monument conservation rules and local statutes.

The promotion program is guided by an expert group with 17 experts and professionals from different fields. The group is independent and inter-disciplinary including experts in architecture, urban planning, culture studies, and monument conservation and so on¹¹. The expert group is a consultancy for the federal promotion program as well. Each state has an expert in the group as state representative. They organise professional conferences, competitions and publications for the field.

From 1991-2007, the federal government has spent 1.6 billion € for the program¹². The result of the promotion program was remarkable. Many historical houses are modernised and restored. Old and new functions were put in newly renovated buildings. Everywhere in the former eastern part of Germany the picture of lively newly restored historical city centers can be seen.

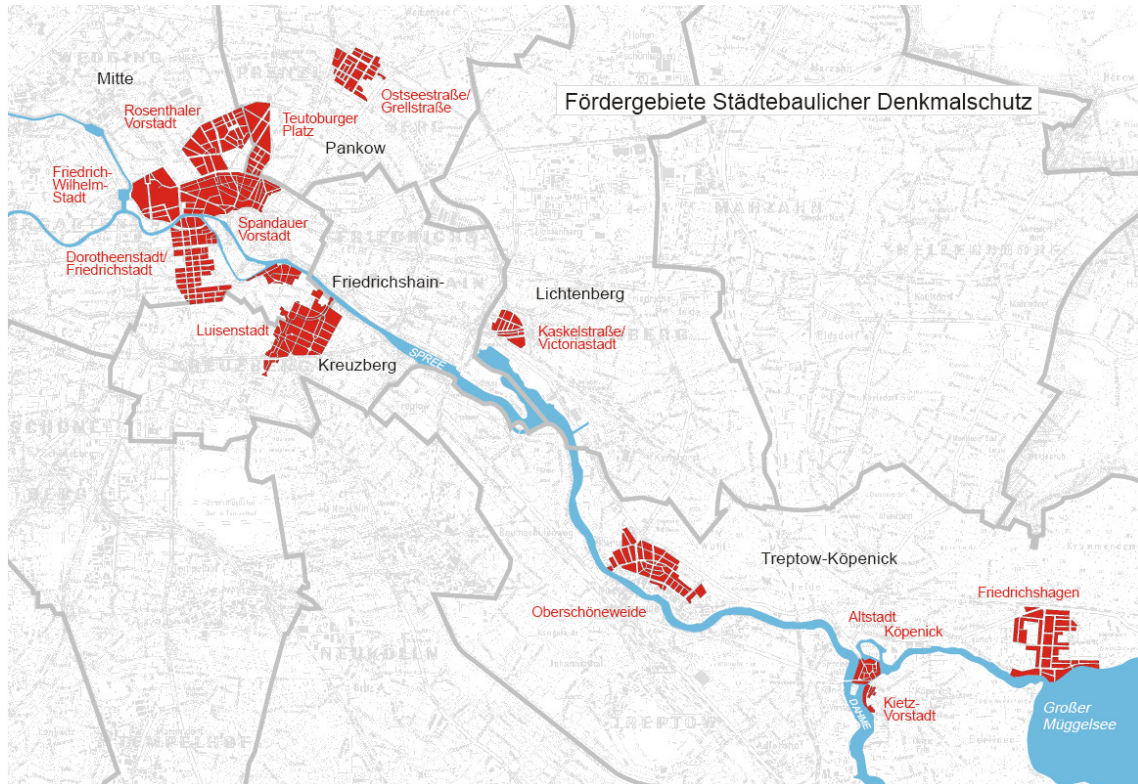


Figure 1: until 2007 there are 12 promotion areas in Berlin
Source: Senate Department for Urban Development

The aims of the urban promotion program are¹³:

- “Primary goal is sustainable restoration and maintenance of historic buildings, especially to make vacant buildings reusable for residence or commerce.
- To take reasonable and modern measures for restoration.
- To provide a reasonable price and good public facilities for residents who are willing to stay and take part in the restoration.
- To conduct a detailed investigation of cultural monuments at the beginning of restoration, including measurement, colour document, systematic documentation, details of architecture and suggestions for restoration. “

The aims focus on not only restoration of buildings, but more important, to make houses “habitable again, equipping them with modern conveniences and keeping rents socially compatible”¹⁴.

3. Case study: cautious urban redevelopment in Spandauer Vorstadt



Figure 2: Location of Spandauer Vorstadt in the whole city of Berlin
Source: coordination office



Figure 3: Location of Spandauer Vorstadt in the historic city of Berlin, year 1737
Source: coordination office

3.1 Introduction of Spandauer Vorstadt

At the end of 17th century¹⁵, the old city of Berlin expanded greatly. Spandauer Vorstadt belonged to one of the seven expanded built area. Originally it was full of vegetable gardens for supplying fresh vegetables to Berlin. The buildings in the district were constructed spontaneously, which is not like other districts in Berlin, with wide streets and mostly the results of planning. Most people who lived there were poor. It was a district full of crime. Many Jews who were driven away by Russians stayed in this area as a transition place to USA.

Compared to the Friedrichstadt quarter (in the city center), which is rather regular, planned, a rich quarter, Spandauer Vorstadt is irregular, not planned, for the less wealthy people. "With its organic historic structure, Spandauer Vorstadt is the only remaining portion of the original city of Berlin"¹⁶. "The juxtaposition of residential structures from a wide variety of periods with a dense network of commercial construction is characteristic of the area". Originally it was full of two or three-story apartment buildings in the eighteenth century. With later construction, its character changed to high apartment buildings and business and commercial structures.

The area was partly destroyed during the war. During the East Germany period it was totally neglected, like the fate of many other eastern German cities such as Quedlinburg. Slowly some buildings were demolished by city authorities of East Germany and new concrete-slab structures took place, while other buildings continue decaying or deteriorating. There were also some efforts by the group Citizens' Initiatives which try to save the buildings. And in fact a few buildings were saved from the plan of demolition.

3.2 Urban redevelopment process

On 21st Sept. 1993, Spandauer Vorstadt was officially designated as one of the redevelopment areas¹⁷. At that time, the buildings were in need of maintenance and in poor conditions. Most buildings were old and needed restoration urgently. The cost of restoration is huge for a big number of not well maintained historic buildings. In the 1980's, it was planned that historic buildings were to be demolished and replaced by new blocks. The only one street which was once restored is Sophien Street, due to the 750 years anniversary of Berlin in 1987. The street happened to be part of celebration parade and roughly restored. Local residents protested against the demolition plans.

Fortunately the plan was not realized before reunification. Spandauer Vorstadt was saved from disappearing.

Public funds play a key role for restoration. With the federal funding program many houses were restored. Government subsidies, non-interest loan, tax benefits, private investment are working together in the restoration process. During the whole process of renovation, the aim is always focused on improving living conditions. Not only buildings are equipped with modern facilities, but also public space and heritage are paid attention, such as children's playground, schools, green open space,

The local residences also play an important role in redevelopment. The representatives of the residents meet local authorities once a month to express their opinions about restoration and discuss. They take part in the discussion of a plan. The topics for discussion include street renovation, playing ground, transportation regulation and so on.

3.3 Effects of culture heritage conservation program

Until 2008, the redevelopment project officially finishes. Great changes happen in this area. The situation in Spandauer Vorstadt, as said by Ms. Dorothee Dubrau, who is the local authority responsible for construction: "All the groups with different interests and demands can feel good, possibly avoid conflicts and live together. Young singles and families with small children, employed, old residents stay with one another. Because it is this variety, a balanced mixture between residence and commercial activities that makes the high quality of the area." ¹⁸

Urban redevelopment in Spandauer Vorstadt has many positive effects¹⁹. Some pilot projects created a big awareness and interest of private investment in building restoration. The owners and investors began to join the project. By subsidies more job opportunities in hand work and local small scale business were created. Positive effects also include improvement of education in special hand work techniques and professions. Besides, need of investigation promotes development of new modern technology innovation and new working field. Job opportunities in creative work were also created.

- Culture heritage conservation

Cultural values are preserved. The area was saved from planned demolition. Although many buildings are in bad conditions, maximum efforts were made to restore them. Under supervision of State Monument Conservation Office, most buildings were renovated. Historic quarters are the memories of the past. The valuable historic buildings from different periods represent cultural varieties. By restoring historic houses the cultural heritage is connected with modern culture. Therefore, urban heritage conservation is not only contribution to the past, but also to rich culture today and tomorrow.



Figure 4: Gips Street 11 before and after restoration

- Ecological aspect: improving green open space

The population of Berlin is decreasing. In 1939 there were 4.5 Million population and in 1945 only 2.5 million²⁰. Today it is about 3.8 million. The pressure from population growth is not remarkable, which makes it possible to develop more green open space other than new buildings.

Originally the area of Spandauer Vorstadt was full of gardens and fields as the area was a vegetable base for the old city during medieval times. With time it was fully constructed with buildings one after the other. Except a few private gardens with summer houses for rich citizens west of the area there was no green open space for relaxation and entertainment. In one interview, city authorities stated that

"Berlin is not like a small Italian city, where people can go to the beach in five minutes. Therefore, the green open space inside the city is especially important"²¹

During urban redevelopment project, small pieces of green open space were created. Those small pieces are empty plots where buildings were destroyed by the wars. The principle is new buildings will not be constructed in those empty plots. All these small green space will be saved. Some small parks were enlarged such so more functions could be added to the park. In all the small green open space, facilities for children are fully considered. Some parks which were formerly for rich people are now opened to the public.

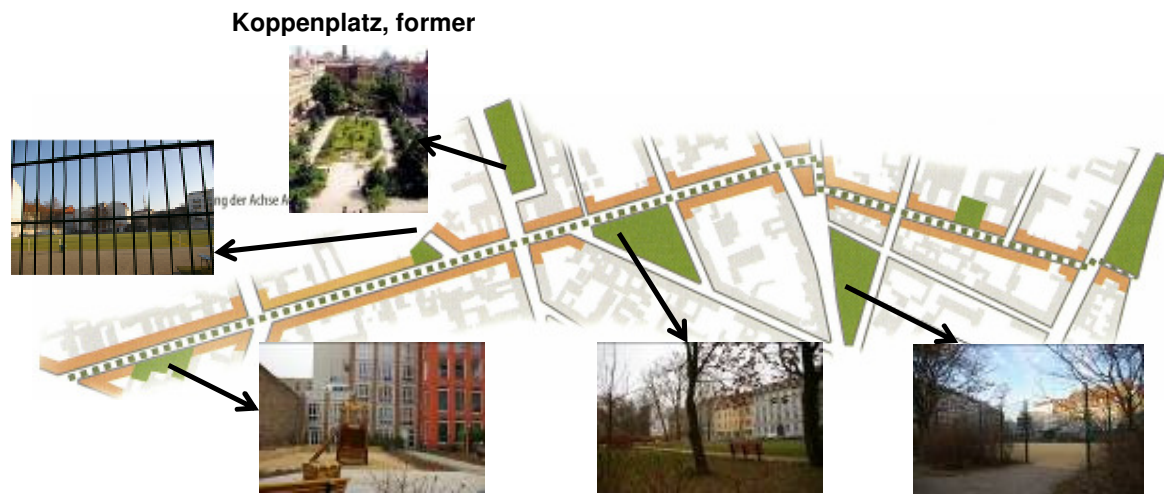


Figure 5: Small pieces of green open space are created in the redevelopment project.
Source: Coordination Office

The citizens are greatly involved in the whole process of urban redevelopment to create public open space, including developing ideas, discussion, and final decisions. These small pieces of open space are part of daily life of the local residents, which are closely connected to their own interests.

- Population growth

The target group of the redevelopment project is the local residents. Residential apartments were paid much attention and provided with financial support. Since 1997, the 3rd year of

redevelopment project, population began to increase in the area. Compared to other areas in Berlin, population growth in this area is rather remarkable, at a rate of more than 10%.

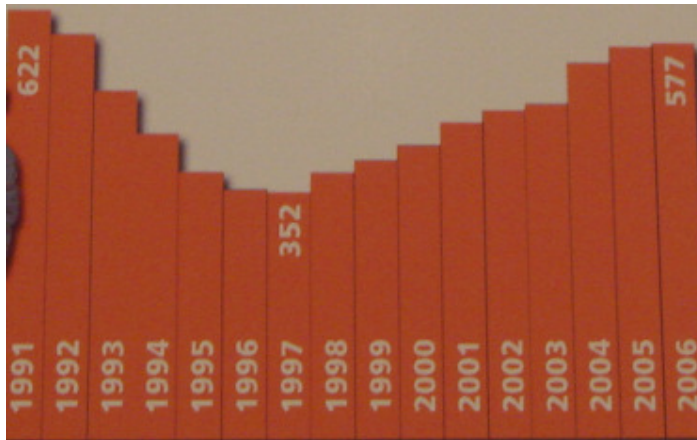


Figure 6: children population growth in Spandauer Vorstadt
Source: Coordination Office

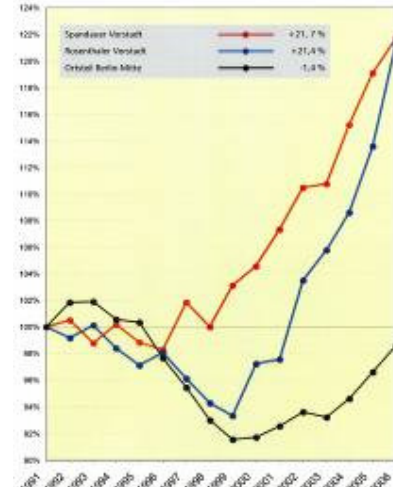


Figure 7: population growth in Spandauer Vorstadt (red) in comparison with other areas in Berlin
Source: Coordination Office

3.4 Controlling growth to a certain scale

With a central location and potential business opportunities, Spandauer Vorstadt attracts many investors. It could be easily developed to a commercial area, business district, or luxurious residential area. However, the principle of redevelopment is to keep its function of normal residents. There are several policies to protect the normal residents. Commercial and tourism development is controlled in a modest scale.

- Commercial development in the district



Figure 8: A café in the courtyard surrounded by residential buildings



Figure 9: Hackescher Market lies in front of the railway station. It is still used as a market which attracts both local residents and tourists.

There is no zoning plan to control commercial development in the district. More shops came and residents move out. To avoid the situation, there are many related regulations. For example, new buildings must have a certain percentage of residences. Basically, new shops will not be totally forbidden to open. But the number and size will be controlled. Restaurants, cafes and bars are more tolerant in the area, but place for entertainment use is absolutely prohibited. In this way, it is also help to avoid competition between shops which is good for their own interests.

However, commercial activities disturb daily life of local residents. In Spandauer Vorstadt, residents complain about the noise from restaurants in courtyards. Shops I main streets are acceptable, but when semi-private, semi-public place such as courtyards are full of shops, it could annoy the neighbouring residents. In Hackescher Höfe groups of tourists came to visit every day. Some courtyards were closed at night to avoid visits.

- Tourism development

The famous Hachesche Höfe, where are connected courtyard buildings right on the subway station, are full of restaurants, cafes, cinemas and so on. They became a site or must-go place for tourists and visitors, local people in Berlin do not go to that area for relaxation.

Although as a principle that urban redevelopment is residents-oriented, Spandauer Vorstadt attracts more and more tourists. Groups of tourists could be seen in the area. Tacheles, a building after restoration still keeping its ruin character attracts tourists as well, which is introduced by many travel guide books. "I go there quite seldom, it is a place for tourists", some local Berlin people said. The famous Hachesche Höfe, which are connected courtyard buildings close to the subway station, are full of restaurants, cafes, cinemas and so on. They became a site or must-go place for tourists and visitors, local people in Berlin do not go to that area for relaxation.

It is the charm of urban characters of Spandauer Vorstadt which attracts tourists rather than its location in city center of Berlin. A place which residents like will also be loved by tourists. But not on the contrary, the place where tourists like does not mean that local residents like.

Until now, there has not any big plans or rules which try to control increasing visits. Some regulations have indirect effect in controlling tourist numbers.

- Car parking for local residents is free, but not for visitors.
- The number of shops is controlled.
- Newly constructed buildings shall be residential in principle.

4. Conclusion

The positive effects of those programs in Berlin are rather remarkable. Not only cultural values are preserved, but also social, cultural and economic development is effective. Ten years after the implementation of the promotion program in Berlin, the project manager, of the Senate Department for Urban Development, summarized the positive results of the program²² as:

- Cultural value is preserved. Historic quarters are the memories of the past. The valuable historic buildings from different periods represent cultural varieties. By restoring historic houses the cultural heritage is connected with modern culture. Therefore, urban heritage conservation is not only contribution to the past, but also to rich culture today and tomorrow.

- Regional economics and local handwork are supported. From 1991 to 2001 there are 424 buildings with 175 Million € funded. Together with the private funding 135 Million €, 369.7 Million € was invested. If we take the multiplying factor of building construction to the economic development as 1:6, the result of economic Gross Domestic Product is 2.2 Billion €.
- A private ownership structure is promoted. The subsidies are always together with the contribution of owners themselves. Due to the high cost of renovation, only with the support of the public funding could owners afford to restore houses with high quality. Owners get advice for restoration and hence are supported.
- Decay process of the buildings stops and historic quarters are vitalised. With the subsidies and owners' financial contribution, historic buildings are saved from deterioration.

This successful example shows that conservation, or redevelopment as a way of urban development, instead of new construction promotes not only economic growth, but more important, cultural values are kept during the restoration process.

¹ Jörg Haspel, Städtebaulicher Denkmalschutz in Berlin, in Bundesministeriums für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau, Deutsche Stiftung Denkmalschutz, 1996, p 317

² Harald Bodenschatz 1996, p341

³ According to 104a Abs. 4 in Grundgesetz (GG) and §§ 164a and 164b BauGB

⁴ BauGB §142, "Die Gemeinde kann ein Gebiet, in dem eine städtebauliche Sanierungsmaßnahme durchgeführt werden soll, durch Beschluss förmlich als Sanierungsgebiet festlegen."

⁵ Neunte Verordnung über die förmliche Festlegung von Sanierungsgebieten, 21. September 1993.

Zehnte Verordnung über die förmliche Festlegung von Sanierungsgebieten, 18. November 1994.

Elfte Verordnung über die förmliche Festlegung von Sanierungsgebieten, 25. Oktober 1995.

⁶ Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung, 2007, p5

⁷ <http://www.stadtentwicklung.berlin.de/wohnen/stadterneuerung/de/einleitung.shtml>, visited on 04.01.2008

⁸ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2000, p7

⁹ Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung, 2007, p9

¹⁰ Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung, 2007, p8

¹¹ Bundesministeriums für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung und des Bundesamtes für Bauwesen und Raumordnung, 2007, p17

¹² Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung, 2007, p9

¹³ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2002, p8

¹⁴ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2000, p3

¹⁵ Bezirksamt Mitte von Berlin, 2005, pp4-5

¹⁶ Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2000, p6

¹⁷ Bezirksamt Mitte von Berlin, 2005, p6-7.

¹⁸ Bezirksamt Mitte von Berlin 2005, p1

¹⁹ Marlies Newerla, Bund-Länderprogramm "Städtebaulicher Denkmalschutz" in Volker Hübner and Christiane Oehmig, Spandauer Vorstadt in Berlin-Mitte, ein Kunst-und Denkmalführer, Petersberg, 2003, p214

²⁰ Jörg Haspel, Städtebaulicher Denkmalschutz in Berlin, in Bundesministeriums für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau, Deutsche Stiftung Denkmalschutz, 1996, p 317

²¹ Uwe Rada and Dorothee Dubrau, 2006

²² Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Referat IV C (Stadterneuerung), 2002, p11

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