# Indigenous Heritage in Cities
# Representing Wellington's past

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This paper aims to examine how indigenous heritage values are represented within western urban environments. By using an urban design lens, this paper builds on an emerging body of knowledge by analysing existing designed heritage landscapes in an attempt to recognize the contrasts between western and indigenous heritage values.

Through the study of a selection of indigenous landscape precedents from America, Canada and South Africa, common representational trends of heritage design are understood. These examples illustrate some of the issues that arise when landscapes of indigenous significance are presented within a western heritage framework. As the world's urban environments change in the face of rapid population growth, issues involving the interpretation and representation of indigenous values will become more frequent.

The second section of this paper relates the common trends of heritage representation to New Zealand's current heritage position. The documents, *Tapuwae* and *Te* Aranga: Māori *Cultural Landscape Strategy* are introduced as guides to Māori intangible heritage. These guides are discussed in relation to the New Zealand urban design discourse. Contemporary outcomes of this current heritage climate, Waitangi Park and Te Aro pa Visitors Centre, are discussed and found to be two examples of a progressive approach to indigenous heritage design within Wellington's challenging urban environment.

**Keywords:** Heritage, Intangible Heritage, Maori Heritage, Urban Design

The *United Nations World Urbanization Prospects Report* states that the world's urban population is expected to increase 72% by 2050, from 3.6 billion in 2011 to 6.3 billion in 2050 (United Nations, 2012, p. 3). If this projection is met, cities will experience an increase in infrastructural development to support this population influx. As Rolleston and Awatere note "Modern urban expansion has a

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propensity to overlie landscape, natural features, resources, settlements, occupations, land use and activities, with little recognition of what was previously there" (2009, p.2).

In post-colonial cities there are many landscapes that once formed the livelihood of indigenous communities. Today, the physical and spiritual 'unearthing' of these indigenous heritage landscapes due to urban infrastructure development has offered a window on the past. Subsequently this has enabled an examination of heritage practices typified by the work of Australian anthropologist Laura-Jane Smith. In her book *The Uses of Heritage*, Smith explores the varying cultural definitions and interpretations of heritage (2006, pp. 276-299). This paper will elaborate on this theory through a landscape and urban design lens by exploring what techniques have been used to interpret and present a selection of indigenous cultural heritage landscapes from post-colonial countries. The understanding gained from this exploration will then be compared to heritage processes and representation within New Zealand. Before this however, a definition of heritage is presented; introducing the different concepts of western and intangible heritage approaches to the field.

## Defining 'Heritage'

A fascination with the past stems from humankind's need to construct individual and group identities (Harvey, 2001, p. 320). Colonial expansion and new concepts of race and cultural identity within the context of eighteenth century modernity led Europeans to believe that evidence of their evolution from the primitive past was important (Smith, 2006, p.17). In the 1960s and 1970s archaeologists, lobbied for legislation to cover their right to protect and manage heritage sites. Many gained stewardship and control over heritage including that of many indigenous cultures (Smith, 2006, p.278). As archaeological heritage values gained more power through legislation, a trend developed in the type of heritage that was being privileged. In this period for example it was common for built structures that were: monumental, of a grand scale and which had identifiable boundaries to be protected under developing heritage legislation (Smith, 2006, pp. 18, 20, 21, 23, 31). Consequently, in the twenty-first century, there is a tendency to perceive and present heritage in an idealistic fashion, as relics and ruins of the past. The tendency in New Zealand to privilege nineteenth century architectural heritage up until recent times is indicative of these heritage trends.

The New Zealand criteria for the registration of historic places and historic areas can be found in section 23 of the *Historic Places Act 1993*. Some of the criteria demonstrate an emphasis on civic or national importance, for example:

(a) the extent to which the place reflects important or representative aspects of New Zealand history;
(b) the association of the place with events, persons, or ideas of importance in New Zealand history;
(c) the potential of the place to provide knowledge of New Zealand history;
(i) the importance of identifying historic places known to date from early periods of New Zealand settlement (Historic Places Act, 1993, section 23).

An emphasis on tourism potential, heroics of tragedy or loss, and rarity are expressed by the following clauses:

(e) the community association with, or public esteem for, the place;

(f) the potential of the place for public education;
(g) the technical accomplishment or value, or design of the place;
(h) the symbolic or commemorative value of the place;
(j) the importance of identifying rare types of historic places (Historic Places Act, 1993, section 23).

These heritage criteria rely on professional opinion and analysis to objectively allocate importance to heritage landscapes, and therefore archaeology, architecture and social sciences have become professions of authority on heritage issues (Smith, 2006, p 284). Smith states that this “ability to control the values and meanings given to heritage becomes vital in the struggles for political and cultural recognition” (Smith, 2006, p 284).

Thought-out Smith’s work she refers to this type of heritage understanding as a ‘western heritage’ paradigm. In contrast to this heavily professionalised understanding of heritage, many indigenous peoples intrinsically hold information on their personal heritage within their communities. This is often defined and conveyed though oral history and tradition (Smith, 2006, p.284). It is described as a:

> cultural and social process which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present (Smith, 2006, p.2).

Objects, sites and landscapes are tools that can facilitate this process rather than being heritage themselves (Smith, 2006, p.44). This form of heritage is called intangible heritage, and has been defined in the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003* as being:

- Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- Performing Arts;
- Social practices, rituals and festive events;
- Knowledge practices concerning nature and the universe;
- Traditional craftsmanship (2003, article 1, pp. 2, 3).

This paper will review case studies in which western heritage management and interpretation has been used to represent indigenous heritage landscapes in post-colonial cities. Firstly, case studies from America, South Africa and Canada are explored to extract some of the common representational themes present in these designed urban heritage landscapes. This is followed by exploring the current urban design approaches to indigenous heritage landscapes in New Zealand/Aotearoa and supported by the contemporary case studies of Waitangi Park and Te Aro pa.

## Cahokia and Nquuza Hill

Cahokia was an Indian American city dating from before A.D. 1000, and was formed of a grand plaza, homes, and large human-constructed mounds. The mounds were demolished in the 1800s to make way for the city of St Louis (Hodges, 2011, p.2). Today, in the areas where Cahokia would have overlapped with urban St Louis, there are no physical traces of its existence. However, within the industrial block that borders the Mississippi River where the largest of the Cahokia mounds once stood, a cobblestone memorial has been erected (Hodges, 2011, p. 7).

The significance of memorials can be traced back to legislative development in the second half of the nineteenth century that was used to protect ancient monuments alongside historically significant buildings (Smith, 2006, p.19). Both architects and archaeologists at this time took a role in identifying and protecting significant monuments and assigning them public value. Memorial, as an architectural heritage tool, has therefore become entrenched in the western heritage design language.

Bakker and Müller investigate memorials, identifying their common aesthetic as being blunt, static and simplistic with a common avoidance of narrative and cultural dimensions of landscape (Bakker and Müller, 2010, p. 50). This technique can be seen in South Africa where a post-apartheid interest with heritage and creating a united national identity has resulted in a number of state governed initiatives towards erecting new monuments and statues. These are intended to commemorate previously misrepresented or suppressed history (Bakker and Müller, 2010, p. 49). However, a lack of guidance in South African heritage legislation on the nature of intangible heritage had led to an ignorance of the cultural dimensions of heritage landscapes (Bakker and Müller 2010, p. 50). This ignorance is typified at Nquuza Hill on the Eastern Cape were, in June 1960, the Ikondo revolt lead to a massacre of local indigenous Mpondo people. Today this event has been acknowledged by a memorial erected by the government (Bakker and Müller 2010, p. 50). Bakker and Müller state that it has:

> ....created a schism in the community, with a general apathy to and disengagement from the event by the younger generation. The opportunity to appropriate and present the memory contained in the entire site — the hill, valley, graves, and monument — has been lost, and subsequently also the possibilities of transferring those intangible values and traditions crucial to the formation of identity (2010, p. 50).

With a lack of tangible, physical heritage material to display or highlight at Cahokia and Nquuza Hill, memorial acknowledges past indigenous significance in a way that presents it to the voyeur as being frozen in time or ancient. Smith states that this separation of past and present is a common basis of many actions within the western world, however, “for many indigenous people the issue of depth of time simply does not apply (Smith, 2006, p.19)”. The value of an element of heritage is not directly attributed to age and therefore the ‘past’ is not deemed as a separate entity from the present. The following case study explores this issue through the use of interpretative signage in an indigenous heritage tourism site.

## Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump is situated in the foothills of the town of Fort Mcleod in southern Alberta, Canada. The sharp drop in the plains was once a hunting tool for local nomadic Blackfoot tribes and earlier first nation’s people dating back 3,000 years. Today, it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has become a popular tourist destination (Opp, 2011, pp. 255-259).

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump has become a tourist consumer object though heritage practitioners’ misunderstanding of its past. Accuracy of the knowledge of the indigenous significance of a landscape can often be overlooked by Western heritage professionals if it contradicts with the public

images that are desired. Waterton and Smith, likewise illustrate the injustice that can occur under the guise of heritage management programmes, stating:

> We [non-indigenous] go into the field and observe them, build up abstract notions of 'community' from material remains, or report on the quirky traditions of geographical 'backwaters'. We reserve the right to speak for them and interpret them, and sometimes, ultimately, we reject them, especially if they fail to conform to our nostalgic ideals. (2010, p.8)

Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump seemed to capture the qualities of ancientness that fired the imagination of many who wanted to develop the site as both an area protected from collectors and a tourist attraction (Opp, 2011, p. 255). However, the jump holds little heritage significance for the neighbouring Blackfoot communities. Though it was well known, the jump was far less significant than comparable buffalo jumps in the area, such as the Kipitaakii Pisskaan (women's buffalo jump). In addition many local elders believe that the story that the 'Head-Smashed–In' name derives from, refers to another jump further north (Opp, 2011, p. 256). Despite these discrepancies, archaeological reports promoting the site emphasised the age and the aesthetic impact of the jump which subsequently raised its international tourism and heritage status (Opp, 2011, p. 257).

The design of the multi-levelled interpretative centre on site raised a number of issues between heritage practitioners and the indigenous Blackfoot, particularly due to its use of interpretative signage. When reviewing signage text local Piikani elders insisted on adding the sentence "Naapiikoaiksi ipahtsiinihkatoomiaawa amo pisskani", meaning white people incorrectly named this buffalo jump, but this was quickly removed (Opp, 2011, p. 257). Traditional objects within the centre, that have notable significance in modern Blackfoot tradition, have also been misrepresented though signage that implies that they are unused in Blackfoot tradition today (2011, p. 258). In this case there is a marked separation between the past and the present not only thought the inaccuracy of the signage, but through the removal of local tribe's responsibility for the landscape by heritage practitioners. It can therefore be concluded that signage can have benefits to visitors of a heritage site, but not necessarily to the indigenous culture that the landscape is associated with. Signage that presents inaccurate or inflexible interpretations of a landscape can negatively affect the intangible processes associated with these elements of the past.

## Indigenous Urban Design Approaches in New Zealand/Aotearoa

What can be learnt from the previous case studies is that often Western heritage techniques of representing heritage landscapes can have the tendency to contradict intangible heritage beliefs of some indigenous cultures. Static memorials, signage and misunderstandings of tribal knowledge can limit or hinder the opportunity for indigenous people to express their own heritage practices and legitimise their heritage in the present. New Zealand is a unique country that is today grappling with this dichotomy of heritage values.

In New Zealand, there are a number of guides applicable to the representation of Māori heritage landscapes in urban environments. For example, section 84 (part 4) of the New Zealand Historic Places Act 1993 introduces the Māori Heritage Council, and stipulates its rights and roles within the Historic Places Trust. Intangible heritage is touched on though documents developed by the council such as *Tapuwae: Guide to Māori Heritage* (Māori Heritage Council, 2009). This is intended to "guide

the work of the New Zealand Historic Place Trust" on matters of Māori heritage (Māori Heritage Council, 2009, p. 4). Running parallel to the work of the act is the *New Zealand Urban Design Protocol 2005*. These stipulate protocol of best urban design practice for the country. According to the Protocol seven design qualities form the basis for quality urban design. These are context, character, choice, connections, creativity, custodianship and collaboration (NZUDP, 2005).

Though a number of Māori values can be associated with the categories of the *New Zealand Urban Design Protocol*, the *Te Aranga: Māori Cultural Landscape Strategy 2008* presents a more appropriate Māori urban design methodology. This document has been developed to ensure iwi (extended kinship group) are well placed to positively influence and shape the design of cultural landscapes within their tribal boundaries (*Te Aranga*, 2008, p.4). Underlying the *Te Aranga: Māori Cultural Landscape Strategy 2008* is an understanding of Mātauranga Māori which can be described as knowledge based on a Māori world view (Rolleston and Awatere ,2009, pp.4-6). The key principles of this knowledge base are:

- Whanaungatanga - Participation and membership in the community and social setting.
- Kotahitanga - Collective cooperative and effective partnerships and collaboration with community.
- Wairuatanga - Emotional connection with the environment that links people (p.4).
- Mauritanga - Accounting for the presence of existing mauri of an environment and maintaining or enhancing the mauri (life principle) within a community.
- Orangatanga - Contributing to better social, cultural and environmental interaction for people. Enhancing well-being.
- Manaakitanga - Acceptance and hospitality given to visitors, and protection and security of community.
- Kaitiakitanga - Protection of significant landscape features important to the local community.
- Rangatiratanga - Community taking responsibly for creating and determining their own future.
- Mātauranga - Acknowledgement of the role of history, mythology, genealogy and cultural traditions as a way of shaping present attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviours (Rolleston and Awatere, 2009, pp.4-6).

*Te Aranga: Māori Cultural Landscape Strategy 2008* seeks a means to contextualise tikanga (correct procedure, customs) through Mātauranga Māori and facilitate cultural practice though design (*Te Aranga*, 2008, p.6). A nineteenth century example of the concepts presented in *Te Aranga* is the wharenui. Drastic loss of Māori land during this period led in part to the nineteenth century development of the wharenui (meeting house) (Austin, 2003, p.43). Wharenui have become integral spaces for Māori to maintain their traditional practices in Eurocentric city formats (Austin, 2003, p.44). The building achieves this by articulating social relations within and around it. For example, the open space in front is called the marae ātea and is used for pōwhiri (formal greeting/welcoming protocols); and the internal structure is seen as an ancestor and used to catalyse discussion over recollection of the past (Austin, 2003, p.44). As locals and guests interact with these spaces the past is constantly being revisited by active interaction with it in the present.

Drawing from the methodology of the wharenui, urban design in Māori heritage landscapes has the potential to be influenced by intangible heritage practices and traditions that have been defined previously as protocols, rituals, social practices, oral traditions, performing arts, festive events, knowledge practices and traditional craftsmanship etc (CSICH, 2003, pp.2,3). This approach differs from the western heritage aesthetic of designing heritage landscapes to become places of passive commemoration that instill a sense of being seperated from the past (Smith, 2006, p. 31). This is explored by Bakker and Muller in their explanation of heritage design in post-apartheid South Africa. They call for:

> open ended heritage places where the emphasis is not necessarily on achieving consensus, but where contradictions, complexity and conflicts, due to inevitable differences in interpretation, may be continuously explored and debated, and seen as an opportunity for an increase in cultural vibrancy and cultural tolerance (Bakker and Muller, 2010, p. 54).

Despite an intimate understanding of their own pasts, indigenous communities have often been overlooked as being authorities over their own heritage within western heritage frameworks (Waterton and Smith, 2010, p.10). However, global movements towards acknowledgement of indigenous rights in the past suggest that marginalisation of alternative understandings of heritage is subject to change. Cultural interaction in the present is actively challenging cultural and social meanings of the past (Smith, 2006, p. 29). The *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* 2003 formally addresses this notion in article one, which states:

> This intangible heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (CSICH, 2003, pp.2,3).

It can be concluded that within New Zealand, there already exists a strong collection of documents that can be utilized in the process of approaching the representation of Māori heritage landscapes. Some, such as *Tapuwae* and *Te Aranga: Māori Cultural Landscape Strategy*, strongly address the need for design that acknowledges intangible heritage values and processes. The nature in which indigenous heritage landscapes are presented in public environments can determine the ensuing awareness of this cultural presence. These landscapes "have a consequence, in wider social, cultural, economic and political networks" Smith states (2006, p. 276). These consequences will be discussed in the following section though the analysis of two contemporary urban indigenous heritage landscapes in Wellington, New Zealand; Waitangi Park and Te Aro pa.

## Waitangi Park

Waitangi Park is located on the intersection of Cable Street and Oriental Parade on Wellington's waterfront. The park was completed in 2006 and designed by the local landscape architecture firm Wraight and Associates. The park is 5.8ha, and boasts a large grass field, Skate Park, basketball courts, riparian zones and native vegetation areas (Wraight and Associates, 2006). It has become the venue for concerts, markets and is an important thoroughfare in the functioning of the city's waterfront.

The pivotal heritage element of the park has been the incorporation of Waitangi Stream in this design. Prior to the development of Wellington City, the Waitangi Stream and lagoon were a vital source of sustenance and material for local Māori, including the settlement at the Te Aro pa (Love, 1996, p. 5). The stream and its lagoon were said to once be the home of a taniwha (water spirit), that fled upon European arrival (1996, p. 5). As the city grew, the stream was piped to allow building over it. This is how it remained until 2002 when construction of the park began (Waitangi Park, 2006, p.1).

Figure 1: Wetland Paths (Author, 2013).

Figure 2: Wetland meeting sea (Author, 2013).

The act of unearthing past landscapes or infrastructures is commonly referred to as day-lighting, and at Waitangi Park it achieves many positive heritage outcomes. A synopsis by Wraight and Associates introduces their design approach for this project:

> to fully integrate site interpretation into built form, is possibly the most evident in the revitalisation of Waitangi Stream, which is both a major component of the sites water sensitive infrastructure and a clear acknowledgement of the sites historical past and its significance to the local Iwi and Tenths Trust (Wraight and Associates, 2006).

An essence of Māturanga Māori that underpins *Te Aranga: Māori Cultural Landscape Strategy* is present in the park’s design, firstly through the revitalisation of the stream and its ecologies and secondly though the water sensitive urban design approach. Kaitiakitanga (guardianship) over the health of the heritage landscape is achieved as water from both the stream and storm-water system is directed though beds of native wetland vegetation that improves the overall water quality (Wraight and Associates, 2006).

In addition to a sense of kaitiakitanga present within this revitalised landscape, day-lighting the Waitangi Stream encourages interaction with heritage in a way that differs from traditional heritage design that facilitate a removed and controlled interaction with heritage places, through techniques such as signage or memorial. Waitangi Park is a modern example of heritage design that successfully represents a landscape that has been physically lost to modern development and makes it relevant to the evolving nature of the urban places of today.

## Te Aro pa

In 2005, foundation work for the development of the Bellagio apartments on Taranaki Street, Wellington began (McCarthy, 2006, p. 517). During this process three ponga (silver tree fern) whare (houses) of Te Aro pa, were unearthed. The whare are the only known physical trace of the Taranaki whānui's pa (village), which stood from 1835 to 1902 (Broughton and Ngaia, 2013). Negotiations between Wellington Tenths Trust (mana whenua), Historic Places Trust, Wellington City Council and the developers Washington Limited, resulted in an agreement to preserve the whare in-situ as part of the proposed apartment complex (McCarthy, 2006, p. 522).

Mana whenua (local Māori) saw the Te Aro pa site as an opportunity to 'share the story' of their heritage (Broughton and Ngaia, 2013). The heritage of Te Aro pa is complex. From the arrival of the British in 1840 Taranaki whānui were, over time, forced off their land (McCarthy, 2006, p. 518). By 1902 the pa was left uninhabited and the city of Wellington grew (Broughton and Ngaia, 2013). The re-emergence of the remains of the three whare (houses) had the potential to replay some of these early cultural tensions. In contrast, the negotiations between Māori, heritage professionals, government and the developers were concluded amicably, and the whare remained in-situ. The remains were displayed within glass imbedded pits in a publicly accessible gallery on the ground floor of the commercial apartment building (McCarthy 2006, p.517).

Figure 4: Te Aro pa whare under glass (Author, 2013).

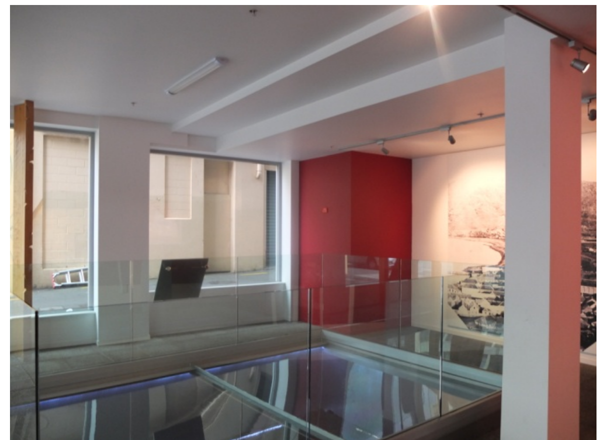

Figure 3: Te Aro pa visitors centre gallery (Author, 2013).

Glass displays have become a common tool in many cultures globally and used most prominently to present archaeological heritage material. Glass has the pragmatic advantages of being able to protect the often fragile archaeology, whilst also allowing it to be clearly viewed. Despite the positive heritage management on this site, the 'glass case' aesthetic facilitates passive viewing of heritage material (Smith, 2006, pp. 31). The "preciousness" of the embedded pits that house the archaeology under ground-level, and their glass chambers, are reminiscent of a museum-like environment (McCarthy, 2006, 524). Further supporting this observation Conel McCarthy observes that "the impression is that the Māori people lived in a distant past and do not play an important role in modern New Zealand life" (McCarthy, 2009, p.115).

However in light of the legislative, financial and physical barriers of the site, it is a notable achievement that mana whenua (local Māori), represented by the Wellington Tenths Trust, were afforded an opportunity to express their rangatiratanga (right to exercise authority) over the Te Aro pa site. Unlike Waitangi Park, the heritage landscape can be quantified by a Western understanding of heritage through the presence of physical remains of Māori archaeology. However, the whare also represent a living, evolving intangible Māori heritage present in Wellington today. It could be said therefore, that the Te Aro pa site poses a unique challenge to the heritage discourse and its traditional modes of representing indigenous heritage landscapes. With the changing infrastructure of our cities, sites similar to Te Aro pa have the possibility of being brought to light in the future.

## Conclusion

The *Te Aranga Cultural Landscape Strategy* (2008) observes "there is a general lack of understanding and knowledge on how to engage with Māori processes and design principles within mainstream design professions" in New Zealand (*Te Aranga*, 2008, p. 14). However, Austin argues that the resurgence of urban marae (meeting [wharenui] house complex) around the country, illustrates New Zealand's growing awareness and acceptance of a Māori presence in urban design (Austin, 2003, p. 49). Critically for heritage practitioners and urban designers, this means that the traditional Western heritage techniques of memorial, exploitative tourism ventures and glass museum-like displays may too become questioned. As discussed these techniques often present perceptions of the past as being removed or distant. In contrast intangible heritage in many indigenous communities involves active interaction with heritage landscapes through protocols, rituals, social practices, oral traditions, performing arts, festive events, knowledge practices and traditional craftsmanship etc (CSICH, 2003, pp.2,3). These actions give relevance to the past within present contexts.

It can be concluded that documents such as the *Te Aranga: Cultural Landscape strategy*, which introduce the concept of intangible heritage within design, are having a resonating effect within the urban design field. Western urban frameworks provide a challenging environment to represent intangible heritage landscapes within. The legislative, financial and physical barriers of urban environments are favourable of a western heritage aesthetic as seen in elements of the Te Aro pa visitors centre design. However, some contemporary designs such as Waitangi Park, are beginning to reflect an awareness of indigenous values of heritage through elements of its design. As our cities shift and change in the face of population growth an increasing dialogue over how the integrity of the past layers of landscapes are represented and maintained is inevitable. It is hoped that these case studies can create a stepping stone for this line of heritage inquiry to ensure indigenous heritage sites in the future are appropriately represented.

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